



Cover Art

In the spirit of the old tradition of utilizing art to aid the exploration of esoteric topics, I have commissioned my dear friend and fellow esoteric CalArtian softshell hardcore (Antonia-Maria Platzer) to create this diagram. It should be understood as an artistic distillation of the concepts expressed in the following work.

Acknowledgements

I want to start by thanking my Mother, Father, and Sister for their undying love and support. I would also like to thank Amber Hornberger, Noah Rigganbach, and others too numerous to mention individually, whose friendship has been my most cherished experience at the University of Amsterdam. I especially want to thank Dr. Peter Forshaw, Dr. Fred Cummins, and Dr. Dženita Karić for their (both abstract and concrete) support. It was the tension of their expectations that attuned the methodological middle way which made this work what it is. I am reminded of a conversation between a very famous teacher and his student with a musical background, which I will paraphrase below:

“When your lute strings were too taut, did it sound and respond well?”

“No.”

“When your lute strings were too slack, did it sound and respond well then?”

“No.”

“When your lute strings were neither too taut nor too slack and were evenly tuned, did your lute sound and respond well then?”

“Yes.”

(Ñāṇamoli 2001, 171)

Experiencing the Elements

*Self-Building Through the Embodied Extension of
Conceptual Metaphors in Contemporary Ritual Magic*

by

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Prelude: First Principles and Key Center

We begin, as we always do, with experience. We experience the world within our experience of the body, and through their relation we imagine ourselves into being. What is to be made of such a statement? Are the implications spiritual, philosophical, cognitive, or an intermingling (like that of a web or a dance) between these? If we ask how one might interpret it, we are sure to get a great variety of answers. Scholars and magicians may give seemingly contrasting answers, but what say the scholars of magicians and scholarly magicians? How might they see this experiential relation of body and world? A closer examination of their descriptions may reveal them to be more consonant with one another than initially appeared. Yet this leads us to a problem of translation. Can the scholar and magician witness each other on equal terms? Are we able to understand the experience of the magician through the experience of scholarship? Can the experience of scholars enhance the magician's understanding of their own experience? These remain open questions, but an experiential *lingua franca* is apparent. Whether in the academy or in ritual, the significance of experience cannot be denied; the experience of both the observer and observed are always a fundamental part of the equation. If we can examine through a lens crafted by this guiding principle, communication might occur at the crossroads. With our key center now established, we can begin this work of exploring the practices of contemporary ritual magic from a lived religion perspective using the experience-oriented lenses of the four elements, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and 4E Cognition. We will begin by examining the conceptual, historical, and theoretical contexts relevant for this exploration. We will then turn to the body, and explore the embodiment of metaphor in contemporary ritual magic through the practices known as elemental exercises. We will conclude with a turn to the world, and observe various ways that metaphor can be extended into the environment in the practice of the creation of the ritual space.

1

Concepts, Context, and Continuation

1.1 Magic

1.1.1 *The Conceptualization of Magic*

In order to explore the concepts of magic and their usage, we must first examine the concept of magic itself. The conceptualization of magic has a long history of being viewed in opposition to established conventions, often being defined by a comparison to what it is not. This began with the ancient Greeks, who coined the term ‘mageia’ (μάγεια) from which the word ‘magic’ derives. They used the concept to distinguish Persian ritual practices from the accepted Greek ritual practices (Hanegraaff 2005, 719; Otto and Stausberg 2013, 16). This continued into the Christian era, with church fathers such as Augustine (354-430 CE) condemning it as Pagan superstition which is linked to idolatry and demonology (Otto and Stausberg 2013, 33-40). As Christian metaphysics gave way to modern scientific thought, the perception of magic as superstitious was still maintained (Malinowski 1948, 65-67). This demonizing conceptualization of magic, though widespread, has not been shared by all. Ancient figures such as Iamblichus (250-330 CE) advocated the power of magical practices such as theurgy (Iamblichus et al. 2003, 57). Renaissance thinkers like Marsilio Ficino (1499-1521 CE) and Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535 CE) considered the use of natural magic to be acceptable (Ficino 2002, 397; Agrippa and Tyson 2009, 690-691). Modern scientists have also taken an interest in magic, exemplified by Jack Parsons (1914-1952 CE) who was an initiate in the magical organization known as the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) (Hedenborg 2019, 176). Even though it is commonly rejected by dominant discourses, magic nevertheless incorporates aspects of the zeitgeist into its own conceptualization of itself – often as a strategy of legitimization. This can be seen in the incorporation of angel magic within the context of Abrahamic religions (Karr 2017, 208-210; Agrippa and Tyson 2009, 499-508; Attrell and Porreca 2019, 164), or the psychologized explanations of magic which appeared alongside the emergence of psychology in the modern period (Pasi 2011, 124).

Bogdan (2012) observes four recurring patterns in justifications of the conceptualization of magic as being antithetical to Western culture. These are that magic (1) utilizes a primitive rationality based on associative thinking, (2) that it originates from another part of the world, (3) that it is fundamentally opposed to Christianity, and (4) that it is inherently evil. These rationales not only affect the folk or so-called ‘emic’ conceptualizations and definitions of magic, but also the so-called ‘etic’ ones of scholars.¹ He claims that finding a scholarly definition of magic is like trying to embrace a phantom and that “these definitions often say at least as much about the scholars who have formulated them as they do about magic itself” (Bogdan 2012, 9).² Instead, I must agree with Mayer’s (2010) claim that in order to understand the practices of magic “knowledge of the emic perspective, i.e., the internal perspective, is important, while the diverse etic definitions of magic made from the external perspective can only contribute little to

¹ The distinction between etic and emic perspectives was first introduced by Kenneth Pike in *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (1967). Pike identifies the etic perspective as an outsider's view that observes from an 'objective' standpoint, using categories and frameworks that may not be inherent to the culture under study. The emic perspective refers to the viewpoint of an insider's understanding of their own experience, using categories and frameworks familiar to insiders within their own culture. The approach of making this distinction has been adopted in all areas of the social sciences, emphasizing the importance of the etic perspective for scholars. Although potentially useful at times, the neat partitioning of outsider and insider perspectives is overly simplistic, and fails to address the epistemological implications of the positionality of the scholar. Claims that humans are capable of possessing ‘objective’ knowledge independent of their positionality, let alone describing it in language, are philosophically unsound. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) Richard Rorty critiques representational theories of perception and language as well as correspondence theories of truth. He claims that despite our best efforts, our language and experience can never accurately mirror the true nature of reality, and thus the claim that an outsider’s etic view provides any sense of neutrality can be nothing but a myth. We cannot possess a God’s-eye view from nowhere; all knowledge is a product of our positioned experience. To claim that experience should not be incorporated into scholarship because it would detract from the experience of creating scholarship is a performative contradiction. In *The Blind Spot: Why Science Cannot Ignore Human Experience* (2024) physicists Adam Frank and Marcelo Gleiser join forces with philosopher Evan Thompson to advocate for an understanding of science as an evolving aspect of human experience instead of a quest for absolute truth in which personal experience plays no part. They argue that the “delusion” that we are able to gain knowledge of the world independently of our experiential position within it is the great blind spot of scientific thinking (Frank et al. 2024, xix). It results from a metaphysical assumption that nature can be bifurcated into subject and object, and a preference for reduction to what can be observed ‘objectively’. They use the example of temperature to illustrate the historical progression of the preference for abstract conceptions arrived at by an ‘objective observer’ (a concept which itself is only an abstraction). Through this excessive abstraction, the observer and observed become lifeless. Regardless of whether we measure temperature in ‘objective’ terms of degrees or ‘subjective’ terms of hot and cold, the concrete reality of global temperature increase (a problem greatly exacerbated by the blind spot) will render our experience lifeless in a profoundly more tangible way. This blind spot can only be overcome by effectively incorporating human experience into scientific methodologies. In acknowledging the blind spot, we do justice to the very thing which gives science its authority: that it is “a highly refined form of human experience” (Frank et al. 2024, 26). This applies equally to the physical and social sciences. Therefore the possibility of a strict etic/emic distinction and the denial of the importance of experience in scholarship must be questioned. If the acquisition of knowledge can only come about by way of experience, why shy away from this fact? Scholars must engage with thought-provoking arguments on the deeply problematic and often unquestioned nature of the etic/emic distinction; otherwise, they risk undermining the rigor of their academic perspective.

² For more on historical conceptions of magic and the problems of defining it, see Otto and Stausberg (2013).

understanding the practice” (Mayer 2010, 2). In light of this I will use a definition of magic according to its most common folk conception in the contemporary landscape.³ This is Aleister Crowley’s (1875-1947 CE) definition of magic as “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” (Crowley 1994, xii).⁴ Ritual magic can then be understood as the embodied and experiential practices with which one accomplishes this change. With this in place, let us now turn to the study of magic.

1.1.2 *The Study of Magic and Science*

Cognition must be incorporated into the study of both magic and esotericism more generally,⁵ and its absence may be the result of how it is conceptualized. Academic study is not exempt from the effect of historical conceptualizations, and in some cases may even reify them. This can be seen in the broader study of religion, where historically religion has been predominantly conceptualized as a text based phenomenon and the result of higher learning (Knibbe and Kupari 2020, 158). This has led to the privileging of the texts of learned individuals such as Agrippa or Ficino in the study of magic. Granholm (2014) observes that “The focus on elite discourse is particularly problematic when examining contemporary esotericism, where many expressions might easily be disregarded simply for comparing unfavorably with the elites of Renaissance intelligentsia” (Granholm 2014, 18). This text-based bias also overlooks the importance of lived practices. The turn to lived religion in the field of religious studies has identified this text-based bias and provided alternative methodologies (Ammerman 2020, 11-14),⁶ but much work is still yet to be done regarding this in the study of magic. This shift to a focus on lived practices does not imply a disregard of the importance of texts, but rather an admission of their entangled relationship with lived experience.

³ Although it has its problems, if I must select an academic definition of magic, I must choose Faivre et al.’s (1995) definition of magic as “at once the knowledge of a network of sympathies or antipathies which bind the things of Nature and the concrete implementation of this knowledge” (Faivre et al. 1995, xvi).

⁴ Although it also has its problems, this definition is used because it is the most common frame through which practitioners understand their own experience of magical practice. This results in its utility for exploring these practices at an experiential level, following Wittgenstein’s insight that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein 2000, 20). Other notably influential definitions which derive from Crowley’s include Dion Fortune’s definition that “Magic is the art of changing consciousness according to Will” (Bogdan 2012, 11) and Gerald Gardner’s definition as “the attempt to cause the physically unusual” (Gardner 2004, 99).

⁵ For more on the academic study of esotericism, see Faivre (1994), Faivre et al. (1995), Hanegraaff (2013, 2014), and Hanegraaff et al. (2005, 2019).

⁶ For more on lived religion, see Hall (1997), McGuire (2008), Knibbe and Kupari (2020), and Ammerman (2020).

In addition to this, magic has (at least since the enlightenment) been commonly conceived as in opposition to science, and the study of esotericism as well as psychology and cognitive science have often reflected this.⁷ The academic study of esotericism is severely lacking in interdisciplinary research projects with scholars of cognition.⁸ Granholm claims that the field of esotericism has remained isolated, in part due to an unwillingness of scholars to “play in the same sandbox” with others interested in the same topic (Granholm 2014, 29). In a field that studies “rejected knowledge” (Hanegraaff and Pijnenburg 2009, 17) which incorporates such a diverse range of types of learning, it is ironic that its scholars would be unwilling to incorporate the knowledge of their colleagues in other areas of the academy. This is problematic for two reasons. For one, the individuals being studied are cognitive agents, and so a thorough account of their thoughts and practices will simply be incomplete if it lacks an examination of their cognition in collaboration with scholars on the topic. The deeper problem lies in the fact that this separation not only reifies the conceptualization of magic and science as opposed and incompatible,⁹ but also perpetuates the divide of the sciences and the humanities more generally.

⁷ This can be seen in psychology and cognitive science in the use of “magical thinking” (Linderman and Aarnio 2007, 734) as a catch-all pejorative term to describe cognitive processes and beliefs which do not fit into a western-centric epistemology that only values a particular type of rationality. This reflects the inevitably violent strategies of delegitimization used by colonists against indigenous people and their epistemologies (Comaroff 2021, 457-463). Such delegitimization can only be accomplished through the othering of people, and this is used to subsequently justify the disregard of their experience. The rejection of such western-centric strategies of delegitimization must be accompanied with a rigorous and respectful approach to study which does justice to both practices and the people engaged in them. This implies the rejection of the process of othering inherent to an exclusive etic/emic distinction, and an acceptance of the importance of experience in both the study of esotericism and the academy at large.

⁸ Cognition has consistently been a core consideration of esotericism. Robert Fludd's (1574-1637 CE) diagram of the human mind (Fludd 1617, 217; see Appendix 1) is a clear example of how esoteric theorization has approached cognition with the complexity it deserves for centuries. The perpetuation of these conceptions through artistic mediums is no accident. Artistic mediums aid in effectively expressing the experiential relatability which inherently accompanies inquiries into the nature of cognition. The continued intuitive relatability of Fludd's image points toward the effectiveness of artistic means in depicting cognitive theories. Fludd's image so clearly illustrates how the rejected and therefore understudied intellectual heritage of esotericism may help to provide science with new tools to cope with the blind spot described by Frank et al. (2024). By including a portrait within his proposal, Fludd has centered the importance of the inquirer within the inquiry; appealing to experience. The experience it appeals to is not adequately articulated as the absolutely subjective kind constructed from the assumption of a bifurcated nature. Rather, it appeals to a conception of experience which finds itself in the no-mans-land of nature's bifurcation, the meeting of subject and object which is the condition of our participatory encounter with the life-world. This centering of experience and the insights which arise from it is one of the many reasons esoteric material has remained, and will continue to be, relevant for our conceptions of cognition, science, and reality. This means that an unrejection of esoteric knowledge is not only significant for our conception of the past, but (due to a reconceived intellectual heritage) also the present and future.

⁹ We can see a connection between esoteric symbols and scientific innovation in one of the greatest chemical discoveries of the 19th century: the benzene ring. This building-block of biological life was first theorized by August Kekulé (1829-1896 CE) in 1865. He claimed that the idea came to him in a dream where he saw a whirling serpent eating its own tail (Rocke 2010, 194). This symbol is common in esotericism and is often referred to as the

Davidson and Asprem (2017) have rightly identified the importance of incorporating cognition into the study of esotericism in the Aries special edition on this intersection (Davidson and Asprem 2017; Asprem 2017; Markússon 2017; DeConick 2017; Sørensen 2017). Unfortunately, besides this minimal work has been done in regard to this intersection, and this is at the detriment of the field of esotericism itself.¹⁰ This work will attempt to analyze the lived practices of contemporary ritual magicians in a way which incorporates the insights of scholars of cognition, and hopefully act as an example of how the dichotomy of science/magic and sciences/humanities can be overcome.

Ouroboros. The motif of an encircling serpent can be seen as far back as prehistoric times where it was carved into amulets (Soliman 2022, 19). The symbolic meaning of the Ouroboros can be traced back to at least 2300 BCE in ancient Egypt, where the serpent was commonly connected to the primeval creation of the cosmos and therefore eternity (Sheppard 1962, 90-91). Greek astrologers placed an encircling serpent in the ninth sphere of heaven above the zodiac (Sheppard 1962, 88). In *The Saturnalia* (c. 431 CE) Macrobius (c. 370-430 CE) claimed the Ouroboros was used in the sacred rites of the Phoenicians and likened it to the rising and setting of the sun, creating an association between it and cycles of death and rebirth (Sheppard 1962, 89; Soliman 2022, 23-25; Macrobius 1969, 67, 137). It was used in magical practices, such as in the *Greek Magical Papyri* (c. 200 BCE - 400 CE) where it is drawn as a protective boundary around spells (Betz 1986, 134). It was also taken up in alexandrian alchemy as seen in *Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra* (c. 200-300 CE) where the phrase “the One is the All (ἐν τῷ πᾶν)” is inscribed within it to imply the unity of a diverse cosmos (Sheppard 1962, 90-91; Anon. c. 1000, 188). The various concepts represented by the Ouroboros were of crucial importance for later alchemists in symbolizing the unity of the prime matter or *prima materia* (which allowed for its transmutation) as well as the alchemical work having neither beginning nor end (Sheppard 1962, 84-94). We can see from Kekulé’s dream that esoteric symbols like the Ouroboros have not only been significant for generating alchemical insights, but modern chemical ones as well. More recently, the symbol was used by Nobel Prize-winning physicist Sheldon Glashow (1932- CE) to describe the connection between forces at micro- and macrocosmic scales (Ferris 1982, 38; Primack 2002). For various depictions of the Ouroboros, see Appendix 2.

¹⁰ The recent (5/19/2024) public conversation between scholars of esotericism Justin Sledge and Zevi Slavin and cognitive scientist John Vervaeke is an inspiring step in the right direction. In this conversation, the three extensively discussed the importance of a cognitive study of ritual. Much of the conversation centered around the necessity of incorporating experience in order to accomplish this, specifically referencing Frank et al.’s *The Blind Spot* (2024). They identify the problematic yet common epistemological tendency to exclusively value propositions, an example of the over-emphasis on correspondence theories of truth. They also discuss alternative theories of truth which integrate propositional, procedural, perspectival, and participatory knowledge. Vervaeke presents clear definitions of these for the sake of a “rigorous” conversation (45:00). Propositional knowledge or ‘knowing-that’ is grasped by beliefs. Procedural knowledge or ‘knowing-how’ is grasped by skills. Perspectival knowledge or knowing what skills are utilized in a given situation, is grasped by perspectives. Participatory knowledge (which all previous forms of knowledge depend on) or knowing through a being-with in which self-knowledge and the object-of-knowledge are interpenetrating, is grasped by experience. Sledge states that he is skeptical of exclusive reliance on propositions because “the universe just isn’t that elegant” (1:15:31), and believes that conversations between scholars of esotericism and cognitive science can begin to address epistemological questions in a way that is “non-trivial and rigorous” (1:16:26) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t9aQuj3n0o>).

1.1.3 *History of Contemporary Ritual Magic*

We will explore the practices of contemporary ritual magic in the context of three of its most prominent currents: Ceremonial Magic, Wicca, and Druid Magic. The benefit of exploring these three currents is that they are the predominant currents in the contemporary landscape, so an analysis of the features they share will help to provide insights into the wider landscape of contemporary ritual magic. Yet in order to examine the currents of contemporary ritual magic, we must examine their origins.

The characteristics of the contemporary ritual magic landscape can be predominantly traced back to the influential late 19th century magical order known as The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.¹¹ The Golden Dawn was formed in London in 1888 by three members of the esoteric Masonic organization Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA): Samuel Liddell Mathers (1854–1918 CE), Dr. William Wynn Westcott¹² (1848–1925 CE) and Dr. William Robert Woodman (1828–1891 CE) who desired an order devoted to the practical applications of esoteric knowledge, particularly magic (Drury 2009, 30). The Golden Dawn drew from various older sources including Medieval Kabbalah,¹³ the Hermetic Tradition, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, and Medieval Tarot, which the order combined and systematized (Drury 2009, 14-26). The Golden Dawn also innovated many ritual practices which can still be widely observed in contemporary ritual magic. The order accepted both men and women,¹⁴ and had a grade structure derived from the SRIA which corresponded to the sephirot on the kabbalistic tree of life.¹⁵ After initiation into each grade, the members¹⁶ were given a series of knowledge lectures which

¹¹ For more on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, see Gilbert (1997, 2021), Howe (1972), Regardie (1984), and Regardie and Greer (2016).

¹² Wescott claimed to have received secret documents written in cipher from a German woman named Fräulein Sprengel. These documents outlined the ritual structure of the Golden Dawn, and placed it in a lineage with older Rosicrucian orders. This claim of historical lineage was of great value not only to the Golden Dawn but other esoteric orders like the Theosophical Society or Freemasons, as it provided grounds for their claims of continuing the transmission of secret esoteric knowledge. In reality, this was a fabrication of Wescott, who obtained the cipher document from the deceased Masonic writer Kenneth Mackenzie (1833-1866 CE) and forged the letters corresponding with Fräulein Sprengel (Gilbert 2016, 238-239).

¹³ The spelling of Kabbalah with a 'k' denotes the material found in the Jewish context, a 'c' denotes a Christian context, and a 'q' implies a Hermetic context.

¹⁴ The choice to include women in the order contrasts sharply with the exclusively male admission policy of Freemasonry at the time, and shows the innovations of the Golden Dawn were not only related to esoteric theories and practices, but also feminism. For more information on women in the Golden Dawn, see Greer (1996).

¹⁵ The first four grades after the introductory grade of Neophyte 0=0 correspond to the four elements, with Zelator 1=10 corresponding to Earth, Theoricus 2=9 with Air, Practicus 3=8 with Water, and Philosophus 4=7 with Fire (Regardie and Greer 2016, 267-356).

¹⁶ The Golden Dawn's membership list includes some of the most important figures in shaping the contemporary landscape of esotericism. William Butler Yeats's (1865-1939 CE) poetry was deeply inspired by the knowledge he

educated members on various esoteric topics with increasing complexity (Regardie and Greer 2016, 131-236; Hanegraaff and Gilbert 2005, 546-547). In the first few years of the 20th century, the Golden Dawn began to fracture due to the leaders' pursuit of power over the order and splintered off into separate groups.¹⁷ One of these was the Stella Matutina, into which Israel Regardie¹⁸ (1907-1985 CE) was initiated in 1926. After a quarrel with its members, he broke the oath of secrecy imposed by the order, and published the material of the Golden Dawn in 1937 (Gilbert 2016, 243-245). It is primarily due to his publication that the material of the order was not lost to history and could have the powerful effect on contemporary ritual magic which it has today.¹⁹

gained as a member of the order (for more on Yeats and esotericism, see Harper 1976, 1987). Dion Fortune (1890-1946 CE) wrote extensively on topics related to the order such as *The Mystical Qabalah* (2000), and started the off-shoot Golden Dawn order called The Fraternity of the Inner Light (for more on Fortune, see Richardson 2007). The most well known artifact of the order is arguably the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, which was created through a collaboration between Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942 CE) (for more on Waite, see Gilbert and Waite 1983) and Pamela Coleman Smith (1878-1951 CE) (for more on Smith, see Kaplan et al. 2018). The tarot held an important role in the order, but the knowledge of the details of its symbolism was kept secret for higher ranking members. Recognizing the importance of divinatory tools, Waite decided to create a tarot deck for public consumption which was based on the symbolism taught by the order but did not fully reveal its secrets. Lacking the artistic skills to manifest this, Waite called upon Smith to create the images for the cards, despite his inability to convey to her the secrets of their symbolism due to her lower ranking in the order. For more on the creation of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot, see Auger (2004, 2014) and Gilbert et al. (2023).

¹⁷ The main cause of this splintering was the claim of contact with the mysterious spiritually elevated secret chiefs, who supposedly guided the order from behind the scenes. This was a common strategy of legitimization for esoteric orders of the time, such as the Mahatmas who Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891 CE) claimed guided her Theosophical Society (Gilbert 2013, 3). Mathers claimed that he alone was in contact with the secret chiefs, but not all members accepted his claim of ultimate authority. Many members also did not accept the expedited initiations of Aleister Crowley which Mathers performed. This culminated in Aleister Crowley's attempt to seize the order's ritualistically significant Vault of the Adepts in London in 1900 on Mathers' behalf. Crowley broke into the building wearing full highland attire (symbolizing his allegiance to Mathers) and a physical altercation ensued with the members present, including W.B. Yeats. This event has come to be known as the Battle for Blythe Road (Baker 2022, 54-56). While the mythologized retelling of this event often overshadows the reality of what actually occurred, the story is significant as it illustrates the historical rivalries which are still sometimes used to justify the disengagement of contemporary orders based on traditional Golden Dawn material with ones based on Crowley's Thelemic principles (Kraig 2010, 24). The collaborative work of Israel Regardie, Donald Michael Kraig (1951-2014 CE), Lon Milo DuQuette (1948- CE), Chic (1936- CE) and Sandra (1959- CE) Cicero, amongst others, has been monumental in overcoming these divides.

¹⁸ Regardie was not only connected to the Golden Dawn, but also Aleister Crowley, who he worked as a secretary for between 1928-1932. Regardie wrote the book *The Eye in the Triangle: An Interpretation of Aleister Crowley* (1986) defending Crowley against the negative public perception he had gained.

¹⁹ This makes Regardie's decision to publish the material of the Golden Dawn one of, if not the most significant action in determining the landscape of contemporary ritual magic. After his initial publication of the material of the Golden Dawn in 1937, he spent the next 47 years compiling extensive material related to the order which was published in his book *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (1984). In his characteristic humorous humility, Regardie described his magnum opus as "a great doorstop" in a letter to Donald Michael Kraig (Kraig 2011). Regardie is also one of the most significant advocates of a psychologized interpretation of magic, which can be seen clearly in his books *A Garden of Pomegranates: Skrying on the Tree of Life* (1999), *The Middle Pillar: The Balance Between Mind and Magic* (2002), and *The Philosopher's Stone: Spiritual Alchemy, Psychology, and Ritual Magic* (2013).

One of the most famous (and infamous) members of the Golden Dawn was Aleister Crowley,²⁰ who is one of the most impactful individuals in determining the landscape of contemporary ritual magic. Although the Golden Dawn's system of magic remained fundamental for Crowley, he also provided many innovations.²¹ The most significant of these began in 1904 in Cairo, Egypt where he dictated the *Book of the Law*, also known as *Liber AL* (1904). This text laid out the foundational principles of his religion Thelema. Crowley claimed the goal of magic was spiritual attainment, defined as an individual's discovering of their "true Will" or an aligning of their personal will with the will of the cosmos and following its lead (Hanegraaff and Pasi 2005, 285-286). Another crucial concept in Thelema is the union of opposites, which is accomplished by the force of love. The philosophy of Thelema can be summed up with the two phrases which Thelemites use at the opening and closing of addresses to one another. These are "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" (Crowley 1904, 11-12), and "Love is the law, love under Will" (Crowley 1904, 17). Crowley was the leader of two magical orders based around Thelema called the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) and the Argenteum Astrum (A∴A∴) which are still active to this day. The works of Crowley²² and the Golden Dawn make up the majority of material considered Ceremonial Magic in the contemporary ritual magic landscape (Kraig, 2010, 38).

²⁰ For more on Aleister Crowley, see Bogdan and Starr (2012) and Kaczynski (2010).

²¹ One of the most notable contributions of Crowley to contemporary ritual magic is his systematizing of various esoteric correspondences. He published these (which he developed in collaboration with Mathers) in his book *Liber 777* (1909) which provides detailed tables expounding the astrological, numerological, qabalistic, and magical correspondences of various words, objects, and symbols. Relevant for the present purposes are the correspondences laid out by him between the four elements and various directions, elemental beings, colors, and magical tools.

²² Another significant contribution of Crowley to the contemporary ritual magic landscape is his psychologized interpretation of magic. The psychologization of magic can be understood as an epistemological response to justify the effectiveness of magic within the rise of secular and scientific discourses. In his introduction to *The Lesser Key of Solomon* (1904) he describes the spirits which a magician learns to interact with through the text as "portions of the human brain" (Mathers and Crowley 2016, 7). The psychologization of magic has been discussed by various scholars such as Hanegraaff (2003), Asprem (2008), Pasi (2011), and Plaisance (2015). What has been under explored however is the response of contemporary practitioners to this psychological shift. For example, Lon Milo DuQuette, the US Deputy Grand Master of the OTO since 1996, claims that "It's all in your head...you just have no idea how big your head is" (DuQuette 1999, 206). This reconnects the psychologized interpretation of magic back to the older idea of an all-pervading mind or *nous* (νοῦς) found in *The Corpus Hermeticum* (c. 100-300 CE) (Copenhaver 2002, 2-5). DuQuette confirmed this connection in a personal correspondence. When we consider Clark and Chalmers' (1998) concept of an extended mind, DuQuette's statement takes on a new dimension. Both Clark and Chalmers and Duquette question commonly held assumptions of where we can locate the mind. Although DuQuette might be quicker to accept an all-pervading conception of mind, the importance of ancient ideas like *nous* in a contemporary psychologized landscape might not only aid magicians, but also those who consider the nature of mind within the academy.

Arguably the next most important individual in defining the contemporary ritual magic landscape is Gerald Gardner²³ (1884-1964 CE), the founder of Wicca.²⁴ Gardner claimed to have been initiated into a group of hereditary witches called the New Forest Coven in 1939.²⁵ This group claimed to trace its roots back to a pre-Christian Pagan religion, and it is from this encounter that the story of Wicca begins (Philips 2004, 3). The claim of a surviving pre-Christian religion was based on the scholarship of Margaret Murphy (1862-1963 CE), but this was rejected by later historians. This means that Wicca is not a continuation of a pre-Christian tradition, but rather an invention of Gardner. This updated history of the origins of Wicca was taken up by its practitioners with much greater ease compared to other religious groups' response to historical corrections to their narratives (Hutton 2014, 207). Gardner was hugely influenced by Aleister Crowley and was an initiate into the OTO. The two met in 1946 and it is clear Gardner borrowed heavily from Crowley's writings,²⁶ with some suggesting that Crowley composed Gardner's *Book of Shadows* which was foundational in the formation of Wicca (Drury 2009, 58-59). Gardner wrote the foundational principles and rituals of Wicca in collaboration with Doreen Valiente (1922-1999 CE) between 1954 and 1957. In general, Wicca combines many of the ritualistic elements of Crowley and the Golden Dawn with witchcraft folklore, particularly the worship of a horned god and mother goddess (Asprem 2015, 391). The goal of Wiccan practices is the transformation of the individual, as Hume (1997) notes, "Ritual is the outer form whose purpose is to act as catalyst to the inner process [...] [and] are used as tools to transform the individual" (Hume 1997, 143).²⁷ Wicca places great emphasis on communion with nature, and operates through small initiatory groups called covens. Since the 1960s, a rise in feminist

²³ For more on Gerald Gardner, see Heselton (2000, 2003, 2012a, 2012b).

²⁴ The emergence of Wicca can be largely attributed to the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in England in 1951, which forbade the publication and practice of material related to witchcraft (Lewis 2009, 482).

²⁵ Gardner came into contact with this coven after moving to Highcliffe in Dorset, UK to escape the war in 1938. It was here that he became acquainted with Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship and the Rosicrucian Theatre near Christchurch, and it is likely that through this encounter that he met the New Forest Coven (Magliocco 2004, 43-44).

²⁶ The material of the Golden Dawn was also hugely impactful on Gardner's development of Wicca. This can be seen in a variety of its practices. The casting of the circle and the visualization of it and pentagrams are clearly taken from the Pentagram Rituals (Regardie and Greer 2016, 484-494). Both the concept and term 'watchtower' are from the Enochian system of magic which the Golden Dawn drew heavily and adapted (Regardie and Greer 2016, 125-128, 451-453). Both the colors and magical tools associated with the elements are taken from the Golden Dawn (Regardie and Greer 2016, 536-539). The knowledge of this material likely came to Gardner by way of Crowley (Philips 2004, 7). For more on Crowley's effect on the development of Wicca, see Bogdan (2009) and Heselton (2003).

²⁷ Although many practitioners of Wicca refer to themselves as 'witches', we will be referring to practitioners as 'magicians.' This implies a wide category of practitioner which ceremonial magicians, witches, and druid magicians all fall under.

interpretations of Wicca have become prominent through the writings of authors such as Starhawk (1951- CE) and Carol P. Christ (1945-2021 CE).²⁸ In the present day, many Wiccans engage heavily with their community on the internet, seen in social media trends such as #WitchTok (Miller 2022, 7-15).²⁹

Wicca is also considered the first instantiation of Neopaganism, which is the attempted revival of Pagan spiritual beliefs and practices in contemporary times. These usually revolve around a specific region, such as the Pagan beliefs of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Baltic, or Nordic cultures. The most prominent of these is arguably Celtic Neopaganism or Druidry (Hanegraaff and Pearson 2005, 828).³⁰ Little primary source material exists on the religious ideas and practices of the ancient Celts, and as a result much has to be imagined (Lewis 2009, 479), or as MacCulloch (1991) says “To summon a dead religion from its forgotten grave and to make it tell its story, would require an enchanter’s wand” (MacCulloch 1992, 17). Druidry can be found as far back as the 16th and 17th century, but was heavily Christianized at this time (Hanegraaff and Pearson 2005, 831).³¹ In the 19th century, a revival of Celtic studies was accompanied by a renewed interest in reviving their practices.³² Magical practices were slowly incorporated into the practice of Druidism over the next century (Greer 2008, 11). These magical practices were heavily based on the material of the Golden Dawn, as many of its original members had simultaneous interest in Druidry (Greer 2013, 1-17). It was not until the late 20th century that a distinctly Neopagan form of Druidry emerged, and it is this form which is most prominent in the contemporary landscape (Lewis 2009, 488). Like Wicca, Druidism takes these rituals and magical ideas and frames them in a way which affirms one's relationship with the natural world, but does so using a reconstructed image of Celtic deities.

²⁸ For more on feminist spirituality and witchcraft, see Christ (1992, 1997), Starhawk (2011), and Lipp (2023a).

²⁹ For more on the intersection of esotericism and technology, see Robertson (2009), Aupers (2009), and especially Davis (2015).

³⁰ The primary contributing factors towards the rise of Celtic Neopaganism are a romantic conception of Celtic heritage and an ecologically oriented animism associated with this perceived heritage. The historical Celts were a branch of the Indo-European cultural and linguistic group. Likely having their origin in southern Germany or Austria, this group migrated across western Europe, settling in the British Isles around 500 BCE. Their religion was polytheistic, roughly comparable to the religion of the Greeks and Romans whom they share a common Indo-European ancestry (Lewis 2009, 479-483).

³¹ Notable examples include the works of John Aubrey (1629-1697 CE), John Toland (1670-1722 CE), and William Stukeley (1687-1765 CE) (Hanegraaff and Pearson 2005, 831).

³² The invention of Celtic tradition can be seen clearly in the works of Edward Williams (1747-1822 CE) during this period. In *The Iolo Manuscripts* (Price et al. 2015) and *Barddas* (Williams 2003) he layed out a series of rituals for a Celtic order. His claim that these writings were of medieval origin is another example of using invented histories as a strategy of legitimization which we have already seen in the examples of Gardner and Mathers.

1.1.4 Contemporary Currents and Their Curriculums

Although Ceremonial Magic, Wicca, and Druidism are distinct currents in the contemporary ritual magic landscape, from this brief historical overview we can see that they share a common lineage in their reliance upon material from the Golden Dawn. This allows them to intermingle and interinform one another.³³ This results in many common features between them, one of the most prominent being the use of the four elements. Since they share common features and historical origins they can be analyzed together to explore these shared characteristics. Granholm (2014, 36) proposes that this relationship can be analyzed through the lens of discursive complexes.³⁴ Using frameworks from cognitive studies, specifically Conceptual Metaphor Theory, will be particularly useful to analyze these discursive complexes, as it will help to provide insights on the cognitive level as to why certain features would be shared and continued through history, while others may not. It will also help to illuminate why certain adaptations have occurred, and how they are shaped by their embedding in the changing metaphorical landscape of their culture.³⁵

In order to explore the practices of ritual magic I have selected three authors of contemporary texts which function as guide books for beginning the practices of ritual magic. The texts are designed to provide a curriculum for aspiring magicians to learn the foundational theories and practices according to the interpretation of the currents' of the authors. These three texts represent the three most prominent currents in the landscape of contemporary ritual magic described above. Donald Michael Kraig's³⁶ (1951-2014 CE) *High Magick: Twelve Lessons in the*

³³ For decades a sort of sectarianism existed in the landscape of ritual magic in which the Neopagan/Wiccan camp and the Ceremonial Magic camp avoided engaging in discourse with each other. However, thanks to the work of leaders in the community such as Donald Michael Kraig and John Michael Greer, bridges were built between the different currents of practice. This led to the deeply intermingled discursive complexes which define the current state of contemporary ritual magic (Kraig 2010, 772).

³⁴ Granholm's discursive method is incredibly useful in the analysis of contemporary esotericism, yet his claim that scholars cannot access mental processes is highly problematic for collaborations with scholars of cognition. Although *direct* mental experience may indeed be inaccessible to scholarship, his claim that the mind is a black box is an indication of a behaviorist bias in his approach to cognition. Although his approach helps to build bridges with certain areas of the social sciences, it shows the need for continued expansion of the scope of the field of esotericism to include cognitive considerations. Scholars of Embedded Cognition would be able to contribute valuable insights in regard to the transmissions of esoteric discourses, but only if scholars of esotericism remain intellectually open to new, unfamiliar, and potentially uncomfortable conceptions of the material they study.

³⁵ Specific research projects on the historical progressions of metaphors with special attention paid to cognition are needed for a thorough examination of this.

³⁶ Kraig's interest in esotericism began with his Jewish upbringing. He claims that as a child he understood Judaism as a logical religion compatible with secular thinking. This was until days before his Bar Mitzvah when his Rabbi explained to him the responsibilities of a man in a Jewish community. Kraig's perception of his religion as purely logical shattered with the realization that many aspects of the rituals of his community did not have a clear logical

*High Magickal Arts*³⁷ (2010) is one of the most widely read practical guides to contemporary Ceremonial Magic. Kraig combines a wide range of magical topics including Golden Dawn, Solomonic, and Pagan magic, as well as related topics like Tarot and Kabbalah. The book is structured in an easily readable and pedagogically conscious fashion which has made it an occult bestseller since its original release in 1988. Deborah Lipp's³⁸ (1961- CE) *The Way of Four* (2023b) and *The Elements of Ritual: Air, Fire, Water & Earth In the Wiccan Circle* (2003) provide an extensive exploration of the theory of the four elements and practices related to them through the lens of the tradition of Gardnerian Wicca into which she was initiated in the 1980's. John Michael Greer³⁹ (1962- CE) was already a well established author in the Ceremonial Magic

explanation, such as the necessity of ten men to perform the Minyan. Wondering why ten and not nine or eleven (Kaplan 1997, 86), he began to search for answers in kabbalistic sources, and his lifelong interest in esotericism was born (Kraig 2010, 35). Kraig was a student of Israel Regardie along with important figures such as Lon Milo DuQuette and Chic and Sandra Cicero. In collaboration, these figures were some of the most significant actors in the Californian occult revival of the late 20th century, helping to extend the popularity of esoteric material and practices to the scope it has today (Kraig 2010, 185). Kraig has a B.A. in Philosophy from U.C.L.A. and is a Certified Tarot Grandmaster. He is also certified as a clinical hypnotherapist by the National Guild of Hypnotists, the American Board of Hypnotherapy (ABH), and the Association for Integrative Psychology (AIP). He is certified to teach hypnotherapy by the ABH and is certified as a Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming by the AIP (Kraig 2010, 35). Kraig has written extensively on sex magic (Kraig 1998), tarot (Kraig 2003), and the evocation of spirits (Kraig 2013).

³⁷ The spelling of magick with the letter 'k' derives from Aleister Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929), who used this spelling to distinguish it from stage magic, to reflect the older archaic spelling from Latin, and for the numerological significance for English Qabalah. Kraig's choice of spelling shows the influence of Crowley on his view of magic(k).

³⁸ Lipp was initiated into a Gardnerian coven in 1981 and became a high priestess in 1986 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240522193312/https://occult-world.com/lipp-deborah/>). Lipp has been an active public spokesperson for Wicca, attempting to dispel misinformed public perceptions of witches on popular media outlets such as Coast-to-Coast AM Radio and the New York Times (Lipp 2022). She has written various instructional manuals for practitioners of Wicca at various levels of experience, such as *The Way of Four Spellbook* (2007b) and *The Study of Witchcraft: A Guidebook to Advanced Wicca* (2007a). Notably, she is one of very few Wiccan authors attempting to expand ideas of feminist witchcraft to include fourth-wave feminist theories, which can be found in her book *Bending the Binary: Polarity Magic in a Nonbinary World* (2023a).

³⁹ Greer is a prolific writer not only on topics related to esotericism, but also ecology and politics. He says that "My writing is informed by a persistent skepticism toward the grand mythology of our time, the faith in perpetual progress. I grant that nowadays we're better than any earlier age at making the kind of gadgets we happen to be better at making, and therefore consider important; so? That hardly justifies the common modern notion that all older ways of envisioning the world are nonsense because they disagree with ours"

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240522182302/https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/greer-john-michael-1962>). Greer is an initiate in Freemasonry, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the Martinist Order, three Druid traditions, and served as the Grand Archdruid of the Ancient Order of Druids in America (AODA) from 2003-2015

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240522183547/https://www.sphinxbooks.co.uk/author/john-michael-greer/19428>). Greer has contributed greatly to the potential of Pagan and Ceremonial Magic discourses being combined. This can be clearly seen in his development of the instructional program for the Druid Order of the Golden Dawn which he published in his book *The Celtic Golden Dawn* (2013c). He also edited and made additions to the seventh edition of Israel Regardie's *The Golden Dawn* (2016). In regards to his other writings, Greer has explored technology and the myth of progress from an ecological point of view in books like *The Ecotechnic Future: Envisioning a Post-Peak World* (2009) and *Not the Future We Ordered: Peak Oil, Psychology, and the Myth of Progress* (2013b). He has also

world before he wrote *The Druid Magic Handbook: Ritual Magic Rooted in the Living Earth* (2008) in which he explores ritual magic from the perspective of the Neopagan current of Druidism. Greer continues to be one of the driving figures in discourses surrounding the intersections of magic, ecology, and Druidism.

One commonality of these texts is that they share an emphasis on communicating the intricacies of the metaphors of the four elements to beginners. They also provide a series of practices to embody these metaphors and understand them in an experiential fashion. Due to their shared heritage, these three currents of ritual magic share many common features in their theories and practices of magic. As a result of their representation of the predominant currents of contemporary ritual magic, the use of these three texts will illustrate how Conceptual Metaphor Theory⁴⁰ and 4E Cognition⁴¹ can be used to analyze a range of contemporary magical practices. Conceptual Metaphor Theory and 4E Cognition will help to provide new insights as to why the four elements would be shared so widely amongst magic practitioners, as well as other areas of the field of esotericism more generally. In order to do this, we must first examine Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and explore the insights it provides into just how fundamental metaphor is to our cognition.

explored the intersection between occultism, politics, and ecology in books like *Green Wizardry: Conservation, Solar Power, Organic Gardening, and Other Hands-On Skills From the Appropriate Tech Toolkit* (2013a) and *The King in Orange: The Magical and Occult Roots of Political Power* (2021).

⁴⁰ DeConick's (2017) exploration of gnostic soul flights is a rare example of the use of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the study of esotericism.

⁴¹ 4E Cognition refers to an amalgamation of theories which reject the premise that cognition can be reduced to the neuronal activity of the brain alone, but instead advocate that the interplay of mind, body, and environment must be thoroughly examined. These theories emphasize to a greater or lesser extent four principles known as the four 'E's. These state that cognition is *embodied* in the physiology and sensori-motor processes of an organism, *embedded* in the world of a socio-environmental context, *enacted* through dynamic interactions with this world, and *extended* into the world through the use of tools and technology. Due to the huge range of approaches which can be considered 4E, this distilled general description will suit us for now, and specific concepts relevant to the material of this work will be introduced in an ongoing fashion. For more on 4E Cognition, see Shapiro et al. (2014), Thompson et al. (2016), Gallagher (2006, 2017), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Johnson (2017), Robins and Aydede (2009), Chemero (2011), Rowlands (2012), Clark (1996, 2003), and especially Newen et al. (2018).

1.2 Introduction to Conceptual Metaphor Theory

1.2.1 Life Through the Lens of Metaphor

Conceptual Metaphor Theory was first proposed in 1980 by George Lakoff⁴² (1941- CE) and Mark Johnson⁴³ (1949- CE) in their book *Metaphors We Live By* (2003). Conceptual Metaphor Theory has contributed immensely to the study of metaphor, leading to a wealth of new research with a wide range of applications across a variety of disciplines.⁴⁴ Although metaphor is often conceived as a purely linguistic phenomenon, Lakoff and Johnson view it as significantly more fundamental. They claim that our conceptual system and the process of human thought is structured metaphorically, and as a result the role of metaphor ascends to a level of primary importance.⁴⁵ This means that the process by which we formulate, combine, and navigate concepts is metaphorical by nature, leading to the identification of concepts as conceptual metaphors.⁴⁶ It might at first seem counterintuitive to conceive of our conceptual abilities as metaphorical, but upon closer examination it can be seen that metaphor is pervasive in language as well as thought and action. It is difficult to *put* these ideas *into* words. Although it may be difficult to *grasp*, I hope it's not too *hard to see my point*. It's *foundational* that this *gets across* in a *clear* way, as it is *at the base* of the conclusions we will *arrive at* later. All of the

⁴² George Lakoff is a Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at University of California Berkeley (<https://lx.berkeley.edu/people/george-lakoff>). He claims he began thinking about the conceptual power of metaphors when (in typical 70's Berkeley fashion) a class he was teaching was adapted to the situational needs of its members. A student had recently broken up with her boyfriend, and Lakoff allowed a class discussion to support her. In this, he began to notice patterns in how she would describe where her relationship went wrong. They revolved around a common theme of journeying, and became known as the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 109-111). He noticed when she changed the metaphors she used about the situation, her perspective changed. It was from his decision to go off script and support the personal needs of his students which inspired his greatest intellectual achievement (<https://youtu.be/Eu-9rpJITY8?si=T9sS3QiEoLQD1Q9I>). Lakoff has also written on the effect of conceptual metaphor on politics in books such as *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st-century Politics With an 18th-century Brain* (2008).

⁴³ Mark Johnson is a Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Oregon (<https://philosophy.uoregon.edu/profile/markj>). He is an early advocate of embodied cognition, and has written extensively on the embodied nature of the conceptual system and understanding in books such as *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999), *The Body in The Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (2000), *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (2007), and *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding* (2017).

⁴⁴ For more on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, see Lakoff and Johnson (1997, 1999), Lakoff (1987), Kövecses and Benczes (2010), and Kövecses (2020).

⁴⁵ With this in mind, the use of the term 'metaphor' in this work should not be understood in any way as a disregard of its importance, like when one says "that's just a metaphor." In fact, quite the opposite is true, as according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory metaphors are the most fundamental aspect of our ability to conceptualize ourselves, the world, and their relation.

⁴⁶ Specific conceptual metaphors will be written in all caps, and examples of their use will be provided in the footnotes.

italicized words in the last three sentences are examples of conceptual metaphors.⁴⁷ Metaphors like these are used so pervasively in our thinking that they may seem to be the self-evident, literal way of conceiving of something like an idea. In reality, we are employing one domain of experience (in this case physical⁴⁸ entities) to describe another domain of experience (ideas) using metaphor. This is one of the reasons metaphor is so fundamental to our conceptual system; metaphor allows us to utilize and combine knowledge from a variety of sources outside of the circumstances from which the knowledge is derived.

1.2.2 *How Metaphors Come to Life*

In order for one domain of experience to describe another they must share a degree of systemic similarity (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 148). Also, other aspects which are not shared between the two are selectively projected into the metaphor. In this process of selective projection, metaphors will always highlight some aspects while hiding others.⁴⁹ For example, in the metaphor “John is a pig” certain structures are shared by both pigs and John, namely they are both agents who engage in behavior. What is not shared are the specific behaviors they engage in. Yet by selectively projecting certain aspects of a pig’s behavior into the metaphor, one can highlight specific aspects of John’s behavior. Saying “John is a pig” could be projecting the eating habits of a pig onto John, namely that they will eat almost anything and will do so in a messy fashion, and thus highlighting the messy and indulging eating habits of John. One could alternatively project the cleanliness habits of pigs onto John to identify his dirty and disorganized demeanor. In both cases some aspects of pigs and John are highlighted through the metaphor while others are hidden. The metaphor does not use and therefore hides the fact that pigs have snouts and curly tails. Further, the description of John as a pig may hide other aspects of him which are not highlighted by the metaphor, such as that he may be a kind person. How something is perceived is determined by what aspects are highlighted and hidden by the metaphors we use to conceptualize it. If how we perceive is determined by the way we conceptualize things, and if

⁴⁷ Ideas are not something that can be tangibly grasped, picked up, and placed into words, nor can they be hard, clear, or even beheld optically. Ideas are not tangible entities with locations in space, and so cannot be something one gets or arrives at.

⁴⁸ The use of the term ‘physical’ should not be understood as referring to the studies of the physical sciences, but rather in its folk conception.

⁴⁹ This hiding and highlighting can be seen in the various ways one can use the concept of ‘mother’ in metaphor. In the phrase “My wife really mothers me” one is highlighting the nurturing aspect of motherhood, while in the phrase “Necessity is the mother of invention” one is highlighting the bringing-into-existence aspect of motherhood (Ruiz De Mendoza Ibáñez 2017, 143).

this process of conceptualization is achieved through metaphor, then what we perceive is determined by what metaphors we use to describe our experience.

Lakoff and Johnson identify this by pointing out that when speaking about arguments in our culture we most often use the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 5).⁵⁰ This changes the way we conceptually structure the experience of argument, and is reflected in our actions while arguing. By using this metaphor, one is inclined to conceive of arguments as battles against opponents which can be won, and will act accordingly. Experiencing and acting in accordance with this metaphor would then result in a reinforcement of the power of the metaphor to make sense of experience. This is how metaphors can become so ingrained that they no longer appear as metaphors, but as literal facts. Yet if one uses a different metaphor to structure their experience of argument, such as dance, they will perceive and therefore act differently in the process of argument. This dance metaphor might allow them to view the other not as an opponent to be defeated, but rather as a partner to collaborate with in a balanced, aesthetically pleasing manner. This would then change how one perceives the experience of arguing, and thus how one argues. The way in which we perceive and experience determines the way we live, and given that this is structured by metaphor, we can understand properly what Lakoff and Johnson mean when they say that we live by metaphors.

When using one domain of experience to describe another through metaphor, we tend to use a more familiar concept to describe a less familiar one. Concrete concepts like tangibility are very familiar to us given that we are constantly engaged with them as a result of our embodied existence. Abstract concepts such as thoughts and emotions however are less tangible and therefore less easily grasped.⁵¹ What this means is that we tend to use the familiarity of concrete

⁵⁰ Seen in phrases such as “She attacked my argument,” “I defended my point,” and “He won the argument.”

⁵¹ Traditional Conceptual Metaphor Theory makes a clear distinction between abstract and concrete, but the distinction between the two is not as clear cut as it might seem. Abstract and concrete are labels we place upon experience based on the way we perceive them, and as such are not ontological distinctions, but perspectival ones. For example, one could experience a situation directly related to an abstract concept, such as going to a protest which relates to the concept of justice, and this creates a concrete experience. Likewise a so-called concrete concept can be used in highly abstract reasoning, such as using spatial concepts (like high and low) in economics or philosophy. The abstract and concrete are intrinsically intertwined. A tendency to see the distinction of abstract and concrete as ontological arises from other kinds of ontological assumptions, such as that the mind and body can be neatly partitioned (resulting from the bifurcation of nature into subject and object). This assumption frames anything related to the body or matter as more concrete, and things related to the mind as more abstract. Both 4E cognition and lived religion approaches reject this neat dichotomy, and advocate for an analysis of the complexities which arise from the deeply entangled nature of mind-body and subject-object.

domains to understand and express unfamiliar abstract domains (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 110).⁵²

One of the most common concrete aspects of our experience is that of orientation in space. Many metaphors utilize our knowledge of this, described as orientational metaphors⁵³ by Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 16-22).⁵⁴ Another commonly recurring aspect of our tangible existence is our interaction with various types of objects and substances. Metaphors which utilize knowledge of these are described as ontological metaphors⁵⁵ by Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 26-33). These kinds of metaphors are of extreme importance for our mental processes, for as Lakoff and Johnson say:

Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them. (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 26)

One of the most common structures of objects we encounter in our experience is that of a container.⁵⁶ We project this boundary of in-out onto other aspects of our experience, even when they are not there. Things like land areas, mental states, areas of study, or even the visual field are conceived as bounded areas which one can be either in or outside of.⁵⁷ Lakoff and Johnson refer to these as container metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 30-33).⁵⁸ Different ontological

⁵² The domain being described by a metaphor is called the metaphorical target, while the domain being used to describe the target is called the metaphorical base. This use of one domain to express another is an example of a conceptual blend described by Fauconnier and Turner (2003), which will be discussed in detail later.

⁵³ Seen in phrases such as “She’s feeling down,” “Wake up!” “He’s in top shape,” “He hit his peak early on, but it’s been downhill since,” “She has high standards,” and “What’s up?”

⁵⁴ In metaphors like “wake up” we use our concrete understanding of space to describe our more abstract experience of consciousness. This metaphor has an embodied experiential basis in that we sleep in a lying posture placing us closer to the ground, and when we awaken our posture becomes upright.

⁵⁵ Object metaphors can be seen in phrases such as “I lost my memory,” “I found peace,” “It gave her confidence,” “Seize the opportunity,” “Inflation has gone up this year,” and “He has a bad temper.” Substance metaphors can be seen in phrases such as “He drowned in his sadness,” “They put a lot of work into the project,” “Laughter filled the room,” and “She is filled with energy.”

⁵⁶ The body itself is a container, whose boundary of flesh distinguishes the embodied self and internal organs within from the world and other entities without.

⁵⁷ The conception of emic ‘insider’ and etic ‘outsider’ perspectives can thus be understood as a metaphorical boundary.

⁵⁸ Seen in phrases such as “I’m in the Netherlands,” “I’m in a state of joy,” “She is in the Humanities,” and “The city came into view.”

metaphors can be utilized together, for example by conceiving of substances or objects within containers.⁵⁹

1.2.3 *Experience: The Mother of Metaphor*

The process of forming conceptual metaphors begins with our experience in the world (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 20-22, 123). This experience always takes place through the body, so the quality of our embodiment fundamentally shapes the metaphors we use. For example, we only have the concept of up-down or front-back because we interact with the physical environment in such a way that these concepts make sense to describe our experience. The fact that these make sense arises from the condition of our embodiment, in that we have bodies with up-down and front-back structures.⁶⁰ Yet the body is not the only factor in the development of conceptual metaphors. Our experience in the world is also greatly determined by the context and conditioning of our culture (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 58; Kövecses 2010). Conceptualization and categorization can differ significantly between cultures and the metaphors used will reflect this. For example, in our culture time and money are viewed as resources,⁶¹ reflecting the economic situation present in our culture. This highlights aspects of time and labor which are viewed as important in our cultural context. Yet it also hides other aspects of them, for example that work can be playful or inactivity can be productive, which might be highlighted in the metaphors of a different cultural context which places greater emphasis on these. So although the concept of time is universally present to all people, the way it is conceptualized is developed and embellished by interaction with a given cultural discourse. This means that metaphors have both a universal quality (resulting from our shared embodied condition) as well as a relative quality (resulting from our varied cultural conditions).

⁵⁹ Seen in phrases such as “There is a lot of land in California,” “There are twenty students in her class,” “They’ve got a lot of sadness in them,” “I put a lot of energy into the project,” and “There was a lot of athleticism in that game.”

⁶⁰ Lakoff and Johnson provide a wonderful thought experiment related to this. They ask us to “Imagine a spherical being living outside any gravitational field, with no knowledge or imagination of any other kind of experience. What could UP possibly mean to such a being?” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 58). Being a sphere, such a being’s body would have no distinction between top and bottom, nor front and back. Living outside of gravity, they would have no experience with objects falling, and so would have no experiential basis for a concept of up-down or front-back. These are concepts which are so fundamental to beings with bodies as we have that we conceive of them as self-evident and objectively existing independent of our relative perspective.

⁶¹ Seen in phrases such as “You’re wasting money,” “That took up a lot of my time,” and “How do you spend your time?”

Many aspects of our experience tend to either be similar or co-occur frequently together, and it is from this that the connection of concepts which make up metaphors are formed. An example of co-occurrence is the metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH,⁶² which is present across a huge range of cultural contexts. This results from experiences of affection and warmth being frequently present together in our experience. The widespread use of this metaphor across various cultures results from the fact that when we are held by our caretakers as infants (an early form of affection) we also feel the warmth of their body heat, leading to the connection of affection and warmth (Lee and Schiphorst 2016, 12). Another example of co-occurrence can be found in the MORE IS UP metaphor,⁶³ in that when there is more of something (such as a stack of books), its height increases. An example of a metaphor based on similarity is LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME.⁶⁴ Here the engagement in actions which have the chance of resulting in either desirable or undesirable outcomes in life in general is seen as structurally similar to the actions taken in a gambling game which can result in winning or losing. As a result of their perceived similarity, they can be connected conceptually via metaphor.

1.2.4 *Creative Extension*

Metaphors can vary in their complexity. The simplest and most concrete of these are called primary metaphors, which are directly grounded in our everyday experience and connect sensory-motor perceptions to abstract concepts (Grady 1997). The AFFECTION IS WARMTH metaphor previously discussed is an example of a primary metaphor. Likewise, the primary metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING⁶⁵ arises from the fact that one of the primary ways we gain understanding of things in the world is by seeing them. Metaphors can be combined with one another to create more complex metaphors, which are able to describe even more abstract concepts. An example of this is the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor,⁶⁶ a favorite of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 53, 109-110). Here a complex of concepts related

⁶² Seen in phrases such as “They have a warm smile,” “Thank you for the warm welcome,” and “Her warm words touched me.”

⁶³ Seen in phrases such as “My income rose,” “The number of jobs is going up,” and “He is underage.”

⁶⁴ Seen in phrases such as “The odds are against me,” “I’ll take my chances,” “I’ve got an ace up my sleeve,” “She’s bluffing,” and “He’s a loser.”

⁶⁵ Seen in phrases such as “I see your point,” “It looks different from my point of view,” “What’s your outlook on this issue?” and “I view it differently.”

⁶⁶ Seen in phrases such as “They constructed this theory from the ground up,” “The theory was torn down brick by brick by its opponents,” and “His early results form the building blocks for his theory.”

to buildings are used to describe the highly abstract idea of a theory.⁶⁷ We can then say that complex metaphors are more abstract than the more concrete primary metaphors. Complex metaphors tend to be more dependent on cultural relative concepts (like a culture having theories and buildings), while primary metaphors tend to be dependent on universal embodied structures (like having eyes). However, the way these primary metaphors are utilized still varies from culture to culture.

One need not base their creative use of metaphor in preexisting conventional ones, but can create altogether new metaphors.⁶⁸ Lakoff and Johnson provide an example of a student who misunderstood the metaphor “a solution to your problems” to mean a chemical solution. According to this creative metaphor, problems are things which are dissolved and coagulated within a solution. Therefore problems do not disappear completely, but can be “solved” in the solution or take a solid and apparent form (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 144-146). The parallels between this chemical metaphor and Jungian interpretations of alchemy are striking,⁶⁹ and points to the potential explanatory power of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to describe changing interpretations of material in the study of esotericism. Metaphors help us to navigate aspects of our experience which we have already previously categorized, but they can also lead to recategorization. In the example of the chemical metaphor, this metaphor allows one to categorize their problems not as things that can be fixed, but rather as things which arise and dissipate, allowing them to categorize and experience their problems differently. Esoteric metaphors can be thought of as an example of this, in that they allow one to recategorize their experience of the world in new ways. These new metaphors and categories change the way we comprehend our experience and therefore how we act, thus “New metaphors have the power to create a new reality” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 146).

⁶⁷ In this example not only is the target concept more complex than those in primary metaphors, but so too is the base.

⁶⁸ Since metaphors do not use all the aspects of the concepts they entail, one can creatively expand a complex metaphor by highlighting aspects which were originally hidden. In the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor for example, the fact that buildings have rooms or plumbing is not highlighted in common uses of this metaphor. However one could utilize these aspects in a creative expansion of the metaphor and say that “His theory has thousands of little rooms and long, winding corridors,” or that “Complex theories usually have problems with the plumbing” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 54). These metaphors can help provide us with new understandings of our experience through the highlighting of new aspects of it. For this reason, the use of creative metaphor is very common amongst artists, poets, and most importantly for our purposes, magicians.

⁶⁹ For more on Jungian interpretations of alchemy, see Jung et al. (2010) and Hillman (2010).

1.2.5 *The Myth of Experientialism*

One might claim that a change in metaphor could not actually change reality, but Lakoff and Johnson would point out that any understanding of reality can only be done through our positioned conceptual system, which is structured by metaphor.⁷⁰ They describe the idea that one could have true understanding of an objective reality independent of the embodied position of their conceptual system as the myth of objectivism (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 186-189, 196-223).⁷¹ One might be inclined to react to this myth with an opposite one, the myth of subjectivism, where truth is only projected by a subject who makes the world in their own image (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 189-190, 224-226). Their use of the term ‘myth’ is not derogatory, as all cultures have myths. Problems arise when we can forget that the metaphors and myths of our culture are just that, myths and metaphors. The myth of objectivism is particularly dangerous in this regard, as it not only claims to not be a myth at all, but belittles myths and metaphors because they cannot be ‘objectively true.’⁷²

Both of these myths have their place, as the fact they have remained for so long shows they serve important purposes. The myth of objectivism arises from our need to understand and function in the external world, while the myth of subjectivism comes from our need to understand our internal world and what we find personally meaningful (Lakoff and Johnson

⁷⁰ This applies to all conceptual activities, including scholarship.

⁷¹ The myth of objectivism’s prominence in epistemologies has a long history of development. The construction of the conception of objectivity has been explored in great detail in Daston and Galison’s *Objectivity* (2021).

⁷² The myth of objectivism’s insistence that it is no myth at all can be seen clearly in the avoidance of relevant philosophical considerations regarding the possibility of scholarly neutrality and objectivity by some scholars in various fields across the academy including religious studies (Jensen 2016, 45-49; Baumann and Pajonk 2014, 871). The avoidance of the importance of a wide range of philosophical investigations in the field of religious studies can in part be traced back to a response against religionists and their confessional theology which the field historically distinguished itself from (Tweed 2016, 977-981; Hanegraaff 2014, 295-367). Religionists would often attempt to interject theological ideas disguised as philosophy into religious studies, and this led to a skepticism of incorporating certain philosophical considerations, such as worldview studies (Stenmark 2022, 579-580). This move is understandable within the context of its time, but an uncritical insistence on excluding relevant philosophical considerations is a reaction which jeopardizes scholarly rigor. It also results in part from a reaction to the epistemological authoritarianism known as scientism (Ellis 2023, 8). In adopting scientific methods, some religious studies scholars (as well as scientists studying religion) have adopted a common misconception of science as providing perspective-independent ‘objective’ knowledge, and thus will inherit the epistemological errors which accompany this. This conception is highly problematic, as our worldview is ever-present in our experience and thus perspectives (Fitzgerald 2000, 58). Gregory (2006) argues that the reaction against the violent confessionalism of the Reformation has led to secular beliefs (such as insistence on the myth of objectivism) becoming “so embedded in the very endeavor to explain religion that they themselves are now widely but wrongly regarded as neutral, self-evident truths about reality. A critical self-awareness should lead us to acknowledge this fact and to move beyond secular confessional history in the study of religion” (Gregory 2006, 149). For more on experience and the philosophy of religious studies, see Schilbrack (2014).

2003, 230).⁷³ Lakoff and Johnson do not believe these must necessarily conflict, and wish to offer a new myth which overcomes the dichotomy set up by the previous two: the myth of experientialism (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 193-195, 227-234). They claim:

What the myths of objectivism and subjectivism both miss is the way we understand the world through our interactions with it. What objectivism misses is the fact that understanding, and therefore truth, is necessarily relative to our cultural conceptual systems and that it cannot be framed in any absolute or neutral conceptual system. [...] What subjectivism specifically misses is that our understanding, even our most imaginative understanding, is given in terms of a conceptual system that is grounded in our successful functioning in our physical and cultural environments. (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 195)

The previous myths share the common feature of assuming that people can be separated from their environment. The experientialist myth claims that we cannot function in an environment without changing it or being changed by it, so understanding emerges from the experience of our constant negotiation with the environment and the people that populate it. They believe that it can satisfy the needs of the previous myths “without either the objectivist obsession with absolute truth or the subjectivist insistence that imagination is totally un-restricted” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 229).⁷⁴ Under the myth of experientialism, metaphor can be considered a form of imaginative rationality (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 194). Since the concepts we use to reason are based in metaphor, and metaphor utilizes the imagination to understand one thing in terms of another, reason can be considered an imaginative practice. Likewise, the imagination is not devoid of rationality, but utilizes it to identify the logic of the structural similarities which form the connections between concepts that allow for metaphor. Given this, imagination can also be considered a rational practice.

We have so far identified metaphor as a form of imaginative rationality which allows us to understand both our experience of our internal and external world, as well as the embodied

⁷³ This means that conceptions of subject and object can still be relevant for scholars, so long as their epistemologies do not make an ontological assumption of a bifurcated nature.

⁷⁴ The myth of experientialism is an example of an approach which begins to address the blind spot described by Frank et al. (2024).

interaction between these two. We now have a framework to begin to explore the practices of ritual magic. These practices utilize experience, interaction, imagination, and rationality as a means of understanding connections between concrete and abstract concepts through the embodiment and extension of metaphor. The principle metaphors we will use in our exploration are the four elements, and it is to these which we will turn to next.

1.3 The Four Elements in Theory: Concrete and Abstract Conception

1.3.1 *The Primacy of the Elements*

Contemporary ritual magic combines and systematizes a wide range of conceptual metaphors from a variety of sources. These can include mythology, Gnosticism, Kabbalah, astrology, and alchemy, amongst others. Despite their origin in differing cultural and historical contexts, the various metaphors are combined with one another into an internally coherent system of complex and creative metaphors. This system begins with simpler concrete metaphors, and builds them into more complex and increasingly abstract ones. The simplest and most concrete of these are the four elements of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth.⁷⁵ These concepts have

⁷⁵ The concept of the world being composed of four fundamental substances of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth was first proposed by the ancient Greek poet and philosopher Empedocles (c. 492-432 BCE) (Empedocles and Wright 1981, 15, 22-24). This combines the views on fundamental substances of earlier Greek philosophers, such as Thales (c. 624-545 BCE) who suggested it was Water (Aristotle and Ross 1924, 125), Herclitus (c. 540-480 BCE) who suggested Fire (Kirk and Raven 1974, 199), Anaximander (c. 610-546 BCE) who claimed Air (Kirk and Raven 1974, 144-156), and Xenophanes (c. 570-478 BCE) who asserted it was Earth and Water (Xenophanes 1994, 134-144). Empedocles claimed that there is no such thing as birth or death, but only a changing composition of the elements, which he referred to as “roots.” The process of conjunction and separation of these roots is accomplished by the connecting force of Love and the disconnecting force of Strife, leading to the appearance of things coming into and going out of being (Empedocles and Inwood 2001, 29-42, 116). Empedocles also makes an explicit connection between the four elements and the Gods Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus, and Nestis (Empedocles and Wright 1981, 164). This shows the elements were connected with divine entities from the start, making them apt for use in magical practices such as theurgy. Plato (c. 428-438 BCE) took up the four elements in *Timaeus* (c. 360 BCE), in which he connected them to the forms of specific platonic solids (octahedron for Air, tetrahedron for Fire, icosahedron for Water, and cube for Earth), and claimed the elements could be transmuted into one another through a process of geometric reconfiguration of triangles (Plato et al. 2008, iii, 39-51, 139). As usual, Aristotle (384-322 BCE) has his disagreements. In *Metaphysics* (c. 350 BCE) he claims that the elements are not fundamental, but rather are composed of a single fundamental substance called the “prime matter” (Aristotle and Ross 1924, cvi-cxviii). In *On Generation and Corruption* (c. 350 BCE) he states that the elements are made distinct by partaking in two of the four opposing qualities of hot-cold and wet-dry. By changing these qualities of the prime matter, one can transmute the elements into each other (Aristotle et al. 2022, 59-78). Hippocrates (c. 460-370 BCE) proposed that the body consisted of four (ideally balanced) humors of blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm, to which Galen (c. 129-216 CE) connected to the four elements (Longrigg 1998, 32-38, 75). In contrast to Aristotle, Proclus (412-485 CE) proposed that the elements partake in three of the six opposing qualities of sharp-blunt, subtle-dense, and mobile-imobile (Proclus and Tarrant 2007, 18, 88-95). Iamblichus (250-330 CE) explored the use of the elements in theurgy (or divine magic), and postulated various entities which exist within the elements (Iamblichus et al. 2003, 103-105, 307). This concept was taken up by the Renaissance alchemist Paracelus (1493-1541 CE) in his extensive exploration of the elemental beings of Watery Nymphs, Airy Sylphs, Earthy

varied historical interpretations but generally share a common one in contemporary ceremonial magic. These can be used as primary metaphors to build more complex ones.⁷⁶ Given that the four elements are some of the most extensively used metaphors across a variety of contemporary magical contexts, as well as for the sake of simplicity and general applicability, these will be the metaphors which will be explored in this work.⁷⁷ Since Lipp (2023b) gives the most extensive description of them, the following section will be based primarily on her.⁷⁸

1.3.2 *Concrete Elements*

The elements are viewed as having both concrete and abstract properties. The concrete properties are the most obvious, relating to our everyday interactions with the tangible substances and processes of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. Air, having the least mass of the

Pygmies, and Fiery Salamanders (Paracelsus and Sigerist 1941, 215-253). The connections of the elements and triplicities of the zodiac signs were made by Greek astrologers, and it is from the development of these astrological interpretations that many of the psychological qualities of the elements developed historically (Holden 2006, 13, 40, 91, 290-292). These psychological qualities were embellished by Carl Jung (1876-1961 CE) (Jung et al. 1953, 135-147, 550; Jung et al. 1976, 219, 368), who combined with astrology make up the predominant historical sources for contemporary interpretations of the four elements. A great many developments in their interpretation occurred after the beginning of the 20th century, and this period has been significantly under researched. This potentially results from the difficulty in tracking the transmission of information within a technologically changing media landscape. The mass publication of esoteric material by companies such as Llewellyn, Samuel Weiser, and New Falcon led to a drastic increase in the nuance of studying the distribution of texts. The emergence of the internet has complicated this even further, with information being freely distributed and discussed in online forums and social media (much of which is lost to time due to link rot). To fill in this gap within the historical literature, new techniques of media analysis are required, pointing to the need for collaboration between scholars of esotericism and media studies. Yet associations extracted from text are not the only source of the meanings of the elements. These also arise from the body, and an exploration of its importance may yield valuable insights into interpretations of the elements in both the contemporary period as well as its historical progression through text, art, ritual, and other mediums of meaning transmission/transformation. For more on postmodernism and esotericism, see Brînzeu (2011), Brînzeu and Szönyi (2011), and Wallraven (2011).

⁷⁶ For example, the metaphors of the twelve signs of the zodiac are formed by combining the substance metaphors of the four elements with the three state metaphors of cardinal, fixed, and mutable. This results in twelve metaphors which each partake in one substance and one state metaphor and combine them to produce the more complex zodiacal metaphors.

⁷⁷ The four elements, along with the other metaphors used in magic, make up a systemic ontology and worldview. Crucial to this worldview is the idea of the microcosm reflecting the macrocosm (Greer 2017, 43-54; Lipp 2003, 95; Kraig 2010, 623). This idea implies that the human being is a small universe, being composed of the same aspects which make up the greater universe which they inhabit and interact with. In the case of the four elements, this means they can be used to “describe the whole universe and everything in it” (Lipp 2023b, 7). This implies that one’s experience of themselves, others, and the world can be dissected and described using the lenses of the elements.

⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that despite them being so fundamental, extensive descriptions of the qualities of the elements in contemporary practitioner guidebooks are few and far between. Even Kraig (2010), who bases four of his twelve lessons on the elements, devotes less than a page to a deep exploration of them (Kraig 2010, 255). This is what makes Lipp’s *The Way of Four* (2023b) so unique: it is an entire book devoted to the topic. In its extensive exploration of the theoretical aspects of the elements, it helps to provide a strong conceptual foundation for the metaphors of the four elements. This is particularly useful for practitioners of magic who utilize these metaphors, but will also greatly serve our analytical purposes here. This is why the following section will be based primarily on Lipp (2023b).

elements, is connected to the quality of lightness (Lipp 2023b, 101). Fire, being a high energy state of combustion, results in its association with heat (Lipp 2023b, 102). Liquid Water cools the body. Liquids are also malleable and adapt to their environment, and this leads to the association of the qualities of adaptability and coolness with Water (Lipp 2023b, 104). The Earth in the form of the ground is essential for our physical stability. Earth is also the most massive of all of the elements, leading to its association with heaviness and groundedness/stability (Lipp 2023b, 105).

The elements also have abstract qualities associated with them that are used to describe mental properties of individuals and experiences. These can be both beneficial as well as undesirable. There are significantly more abstract qualities of the elements than there are concrete. Simply put, Air is associated with thoughts and communication, Fire is associated with will and passion, Water is associated with feelings and adaptability, and Earth is associated with practicality and materiality (Lipp 2023b, 8-16, 49; Kraig 2010, 541; Greer 2008, 48). The fact that some of these are the same as an element's tangible concrete qualities is no accident. The abstract qualities are selected because they have a connection to the concrete qualities, and this will be explored later. For now, it will be useful to explore the abstract qualities of each element in more detail.

1.3.3 Abstract Elements

Air can be connected to abstract concepts involving thought and communication (Lipp 2023b, 8; Kraig 2010, 541; Greer 2008, 48). Connected to thought are concepts such as rationality, ideas, theorizing, inspiration, and imagination (Lipp 2023b, 57). Seeing something from the perspective of Air would mean to think things through and look at them in terms of abstract systems and structures, potentially at the expense of individual details (Lipp 2023b, 58-59). Communication can be associated with concepts such as language and speech. This means Air is also associated with the eloquent use of language, and communication of ideas more generally. Air can therefore be used to describe both the generation and transmission of ideas. This creates an association with activities which communicate thoughts, such as education and writing (Lipp 2023b, 57). The associated qualities with Air can be both beneficial and undesirable. For example, abstract ideas can be intellectually stimulating, but may lack the ability for practical application (Lipp 2023b, 57-59).

Fire can be connected to abstract concepts involving will and passion (Lipp 2023b, 12; Kraig 2010, 541; Greer 2008, 48). Connected with will are concepts such as goals, desires, and the energy required to accomplish them (Lipp 2023b, 57). This can mean acting on impulse, or responding immediately when a desire arises. Seeing things in terms of Fire would mean to see things in regards to what one wishes to accomplish. This also implies the concept of passion, which is required for one to sustain the will and energy needed to accomplish their goal (Lipp 2023b, 60). The passion of Fire can also be associated with sexuality (Lipp 2023b 59-60; Kraig 2010, 541).⁷⁹ As with all the elements, Fire's qualities can also have negative applications. The passion and desire oriented quality of Fire may lead to obsession, where one becomes overwhelmed with desire or passion and subsequently lacks concerns for other matters. The most common example of this is anger, where one becomes tunnel visioned by their impassioned desires at the expense of other considerations (Lipp 2023b, 59-60).⁸⁰

Water is connected with abstract concepts involving feelings and adaptability (Lipp 2023b, 13; Kraig 2010, 541; Greer 2008, 48). Connected with feelings are the concepts of sensitivity, empathy, compassion, and nurturing (Lipp 2023b, 58). Seeing something from the perspective of Water would mean being sensitive to the emotional aspects of a situation, being empathetic to the feelings of others and having compassion for them, as well as nurturing them as a result of these considerations (Lipp 2023b, 60-61). Connected with adaptability are the concepts of receptivity and being fluid. Water allows one to be receptive to changes in a situation, and malleable enough to “go with the flow” (Lipp 2023b, 60). The negative qualities of Water result from an excess of feelings and adaptability. One example of this could be over-emotionality, resulting in being “over-dramatic” or irrational due to an over indulgence in emotions (Lipp 2023b, 61). Another example is being “pushed around” or in other words overly adaptive to a situation at the expense of one's own needs and stability (Lipp 2023b, 61; Kraig 2010, 363).

Finally, Earth is connected with abstract concepts involving practicality and materiality (Lipp 2023b, 15; Kraig 2010, 541; Greer 2008, 48). Connected with practicality are the concepts of pragmatism, stability, groundedness, endurance, patience, and being realistic (Lipp 2023b, 58). Connected with materiality are concepts such as tactile sensation, the physical world, the

⁷⁹ This can be seen in the fact that we often use the term ‘hot’ to describe someone sexually attractive.

⁸⁰ The connection between Fire's quality of heat and anger can be seen in terms such as ‘hot-headed’ or ‘hot-tempered.’

body, and business/money (Lipp 2023b, 58). To see things from the perspective of Earth would mean to focus on the most practical essentials, such as having enough money to buy the necessary material goods to survive such as food and shelter (Lipp 2023b, 61). It could also mean a preference for goals which are achievable and rooted in practical application, and adopting a patient methodological strategy for achieving them. It might also mean a preference for what can be beheld tangibly, such as things that can be interacted with concretely through the body, resulting in a preference for goals which result in a physical product (Lipp 2023b 16, 62). An example of an excess of Earth could be stubbornness, or being a “stick in the mud” and resistant to change. This could mean holding onto a habit or maintaining a position despite its undesirable effects (Lipp 2023b, 58, 62).⁸¹

The elements also have a variety of material objects which can be used to stand for them both literally and metonymically. Although a huge number of objects could be connected to the elements given the qualities described above, four sets will be explored due to their prominence in contemporary ritual magic practices. The first set are concrete, literal instantiations of the elements, with incense for Air, a candle for Fire, Water for Water, and salt for Earth (Lipp 2003, 6-13). Another set is the magical tools, which are action enabling objects abstractly associated with the elements metonymically. These are the sword (or dagger) for Air, the wand for Fire,⁸² the cup for Water, and the pentacle for Earth (Regardie 1984, Vol. 4, 27-34). The cardinal directions are also associated with the elements, with Air in the east, Fire in the south, Water in the west, and Earth in the north (Lipp 2003, 124-128; Greer 2008, 114; Kraig 2010; 115-116). The final is a set of color associations for the elements. These are yellow for Air, red for Fire, blue for Water, and green for Earth (Lipp 2023b, 8-16, Greer 2008, 114).

⁸¹ Although they all involve both abstract and concrete concepts, in general Air deals with the most abstract concepts, followed by Fire, then Water, and Earth deals with the most concrete concepts.

⁸² There are some who reverse the association of Fire and Air, making the wand the tool of Air and the sword the tool of Fire. This comes from the compound use of the metaphors of the ritual tools by the Golden Dawn. The association of Fire to wands and Air to swords results from the attributions obtained from the elemental tools which one builds for each of the grades associated with the elements (Regardie 1984, Vol. 4, 27-34). The association of the wands to Air and swords to Fire comes from the objects which are held by the angels in the invocatory visualizations of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (Regardie et al. 2002, 62). The reason for the difference in association lies in the highly complex, multi-layered usage of symbols by the Golden Dawn, and falls outside the scope of the present analysis of their basic use. What is relevant is the choice of Golden Dawn member A.E. Waite to associate the swords with Air and wands with Fire in his classic *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1910). The popularity of this book has drastically affected interpretations of the elements in the contemporary landscape, particularly in regard to their attribution to the magical tools.

Element	Concrete Concepts	Abstract Concepts: Primary	Abstract Concepts: Derivative	Ritual Objects: Literal	Ritual Objects: Metonymic	Direction	Color
Air Δ	Lightness	Thoughts, Communication	Rationality, Language Ideas, Theorizing, Inspiration, Imagination	Incense	Sword/Dagger	East	Yellow
Fire Δ	Heat, Energy	Will, Passion	Goals, Desires, Energy, Sexuality	Candle	Wand	South	Red
Water ∇	Coolness, Adaptability	Feelings, Adaptability	Sensitivity, Empathy, Compassion, Nurturing, Receptivity, Being Fluid	Water	Cup	West	Blue
Earth ∇	Heaviness, Groundedness/Stability	Practicality, Materiality	Pragmatism, Stability, Groundedness, Endurance, Patience, Being Realistic, Tactile Sensation, The Physical World, The Body, Business/Money	Salt	Pentacle	North	Green

Table
Attributions of the Four Elements

As seen in the above description, the metaphors of the four elements are used as lenses for introspection and perception of the world. They can be used to examine the self as well as aspects of the world which the self encounters in their experience. Thus, they are both outward and inward facing metaphors. They collectively make up an ontology to assist in navigating one's experience in the world, and form the foundation of the wider ontology which composes the magical worldview. As Lipp says, "The four elements give us a way of thinking about the world. They give us a structured approach to knowing the unknowable. They provide us with a system of interrelations, and magic is all about interrelations" (Lipp 2023b, 7). It is this system of interrelations which we will turn to next.

1.3.4 The Systemic Quartet of the Elements

The elements are not isolated entities, but form a cohesive system of metaphors which are interrelated and interact with each other. Through this, the elements are said to harmonize or balance each other. What this means is that the negative qualities of one element are voided by the positive qualities of the other elements (Lipp 2023b, 87-94). This reflects Lakoff and Johnson's idea that in a metaphorical blend, metaphors will always highlight some aspects of a given thing, while hiding others. Each elemental metaphor helps to highlight some aspects of experience which would be hidden by the others (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 153; Ruiz De Mendoza Ibáñez 2017, 143). This is why these metaphors can combine to create a cohesive

ontology. By balancing the process of metaphorical hiding and highlighting, they allow a more cohesive grasp of the self and the world through a dynamic use of the four metaphors and an underlying understanding of their interrelation.

Let us explore how this is done. Lipp gives the example of stubbornness, a negative quality associated with Earth, which could be balanced by both Air and Water (Lipp 2023b, 94).⁸³ This is because “stubbornness is sometimes a refusal to listen and reason, and Air is reasonable” and “Water is adaptable to change, so if your stubbornness is resistance to change, Water diminishes it” (Lipp 2023b, 92). One could use the concrete qualities of the elements to illustrate this balance as well.⁸⁴ This ability for the concrete properties to describe the abstract ones is accomplished through the COMPARISON OF PROPERTIES IS COMPARISON OF PHYSICAL PROPERTIES metaphor.⁸⁵ For example, rocks are normally hard and stubbornly immobile, but given enough time the forces of both wind and Water can overcome this stubbornness through the process of erosion. This geological metaphor could then be used to show Water and Air can be used to balance Earth.

The principle which unites and balances the four elements is conceived as a fifth element: Spirit. Spirit is placed higher ontologically than the other four, as it both takes part in and unites all the elements with one another and itself (Lipp 2023b, 22-23). This is often expressed metonymically through the symbol of the pentagram. In this, the four lower points are associated with Air, Fire, Water, and Earth, while the point at the head of the pentagram is associated with Spirit (Kraig 2010, 392; Lipp 2023b, 23; see Appendix 5).

1.4 From Theory to Practice

Thus far we have examined both historical and academic conceptions of magic, and outlined the main factors which have shaped its contemporary manifestation. This was followed by an investigation of the metaphorical nature of the conceptual system, and the conceptual metaphors of the four elements. With a theoretical overview of magic, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and the four elements in place, we are now in a position where we can begin to explore

⁸³ Lipp (2023b) provides a very useful table of various positive and negative qualities and which elements are used to balance these out, which can be found in Appendix 4.

⁸⁴ Another interesting example of the elements balancing each other is the use of Water to counteract the anger of Fire (Lipp 2023b, 93). The relationship of the two temperature-based concrete concepts present in Fire and Water can be seen in the common use of the term ‘cool off’ to describe taking time to diffuse one’s anger.

⁸⁵ Seen in phrases such as “You have to weigh the pros and cons” and “She’s a heavier smoker than she used to be.”

the practices of contemporary ritual magic. This exploration will focus upon two common sets of practices described by our three contemporary authors. These are the elemental exercises and the creation of the ritual space. The elemental exercises are practices of embodying the four elements and the creation of the ritual space are practices of extending the four elements into the world. These are done as a means of understanding and manipulating them on an experiential level. We will explore the elemental exercises first, as they are a means of encountering the four elements through the body, and it is always through the body that we must begin an inquiry into experience.

2

The Body

2.1 Embodiment of the Elements

2.1.1 Connecting Abstract and Concrete Qualities

The four elements are conceived as substances which make up both the self and the world (Lipp 2023b, 7). As a result, the four elements are fundamentally substance metaphors. The substances of the elements are connected to the abstract attributes associated with them through the ATTRIBUTES ARE ENTITIES metaphor.⁸⁶ Both the entities and attributes associated with the elements all have properties. The properties of the entities are the somatically sensible qualities⁸⁷ associated with the elements and their subsequent concrete concepts, and the properties of the attributes are the various abstract concepts associated with the element. The concrete properties of the entities and abstract properties of the attributes are then connected through the PROPERTIES ARE PHYSICAL PROPERTIES metaphor.⁸⁸ This is how the abstract and concrete qualities of the elements are connected to each other metaphorically. The connection of these qualities is not completely arbitrary, but rather arises from our embodied experience. These result from direct correlations arising from the simultaneous experience of the concrete and abstract qualities associated with the elements. These are exactly the experiences which the elemental exercises create. The simultaneous presence of concrete and abstract qualities act as experiential source material from which the metaphorical associations of the concrete and abstract qualities of the elements can be made. A detailed exploration of these experiential roots of the elements will be useful at this point to illustrate just how embodied the metaphors of the elements are.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Seen in phrases such as “She has a sharp mind,” “They have a strong bond,” and “His beauty struck me.” The connection of Earth and practicality can be seen clearly in the phrase “She is down to Earth.”

⁸⁷ Somatic sensation can be understood as perception derived from sensory modalities based on the five senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing. This can be both tangible and imaginal.

⁸⁸ Seen in phrases such as “That’s a big discovery,” “The theory touches on many deep issues,” and “I’m short on money.”

⁸⁹ The embodiment of the four elements can not only be seen in practitioners of magic, but also in some medical practitioners who advocate for their use as a lens for exploring physiological health (Sarris et al. 2019).

2.1.2 *The Embodied Roots of the Elements*

Fire is hot, and the association of flames and heat is so self-evident it may go without saying. The abstract qualities associated with Fire are also often experienced in coordination with heat. For example, when we engage in activities that involve passion, such as anger or sex, our body temperature rises (Kövecses 2008, 392-395). Because we experience heat simultaneously when we are experiencing flames, sexual desire, or anger, these can be associated with each other through their shared bodily experience of heat.⁹⁰ Energy is also associated with Fire. Just like anger and sexual desire, when we engage in energetic activities like exercise, our body temperature rises leading to the association of Fire and energy. Desire too is connected with Fire. When we experience sexual desire our body temperature also rises (Hahn et al. 2012, 864),⁹¹ again leading to its association with Fire by way of their commonality of heat. The entirety of the concepts associated with Fire are done so through the obvious association with heat.

Water has a cooling effect on the body due to the dispersion of heat during evaporation (Wilke et al. 2007, 169). As a result, Water is associated with the concrete quality of coolness. Water's association with the quality of feelings⁹² arises from the bodily experience of crying. The simultaneous experience of Water being excreted from the body and the feelings which trigger this leads to their connection in the metaphor. Water's association with nurturing comes from it being a fundamental requirement for the nourishment of all life. Its bodily basis can be seen not only in its quenching of parched people and plants, but also other liquids such as breast milk necessary for the nourishment of infants. Liquid Water is adaptable to what contains it. When it is not contained, it will adapt to its environment and find the path of least resistance in its march toward lower altitudes (Southard 2007, 139-142).⁹³ This leads to the association of Water with the abstract concept of adaptability.⁹⁴

Earth in the form of stones and soil is the most dense of all the four elements, leading to its association with the concrete quality of heaviness. The ground below our feet is one of the most stable and consistent aspects of our experience. The fact that Earth in the form of the ground endures throughout our experiences results in the association of endurance with Earth.

⁹⁰ The connection of heat and anger can be seen in phrases such as “He’s a hot-head” and “She’s got a hot temper.” The connection of heat and sex can be seen in the description of sexual attractiveness as “hot.”

⁹¹ Seen in phrases such as “She’s got the hots for her” and “his heart burned with desire for him.”

⁹² Seen common in phrases such as “I was overflowing with joy” and “a feeling of horror washed over her.”

⁹³ Seen in how rivers will change their course to adapt to changes in the geological landscape.

⁹⁴ Adaptability can describe both a tangible quality of physics as well as a psychological quality of a person, leading to its potential to be used for both concrete and abstract conceptualization.

We are almost always physically in contact with the ground, and when we are not (such as when we are falling) our bodily stability is compromised (Davis 2018, 114-138). Due to the reliance on contact with the ground for stability which our bodies and other objects require,⁹⁵ the abstract quality of stability is connected with the element of Earth. This abstract concept of stability can be physical, in that the form of Earth is solid and therefore the most stable and unchanging of all of the elements. It can also be used to describe personal qualities, such as being emotionally or financially stable.⁹⁶ Materiality is connected to Earth because the raw materials for our endeavors are extracted from the Earth.⁹⁷

Air is the least visually perceptible of all of the elements. When it can be visibly perceived, it is usually in conjunction with another element.⁹⁸ When it can be seen, it often is rising, and combined with the fact that the weight of atmospheric pressure is almost always imperceptible (Tytler 1998, 929), the association of lightness is made with Air. Likewise, thoughts and abstract intellectual concepts cannot be directly seen, and this leads to the association of Air with intellect and thought. Although they cannot be directly seen, we are still able to communicate them. The most common way to communicate thought is verbally, and verbal communication is achieved through use of the breath. Breath is the most fundamental interaction of the body and Air, and speech is not only triggered by the Air of one's breath, but also travels through the Air to reach the hearer (Durrant and Feth 2014, 281-283). Since Air is both the origin and medium of verbal communication, the association of Air and communication is made.

⁹⁵ As well as the stability of the ground itself in our experience.

⁹⁶ Seen in phrases such as “She is a grounded person,” “They’re down to earth,” and “He’s emotionally stable.”

⁹⁷ Or something which is rooted in the Earth like plants.

⁹⁸ Such as steam which combines Water and Air, or smoke which combines Fire and Air.

2.2 The Four Elements in Practice: Engaging the Elements

2.2.1 Elemental Exercises

Elemental exercises are some of the most widespread early training material in contemporary ritual magic.⁹⁹ The goal of the elemental exercises is to gain familiarity with the elements through embodied experiences of them and their associated tangible and psychological qualities. This can be done in a variety of ways, but a unifying theme amongst the exercises that will be explored is involvement of the body and sensory experience. These exercises can be done independently, or be incorporated into a larger ritual context.

In his first elemental exercises, Kraig (2010) asks the magician-in-training to engage in practices which involve actively seeking out sensory experiences related to the elements in one's environment.¹⁰⁰ These all provide embodied situations related to the element which heavily engage multiple forms of sensation (Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 434). A situation can be understood as a contextualized experience that is perceived through multiple sensory modalities (both somatic and affective) which is accompanied by the conscious awareness of being-there¹⁰¹ within the situation. The next of Kraig's exercises involves learning to "be" a given element. To

⁹⁹ These exercises are seemingly simple compared to many other practices of ritual magic. Their simplicity however should not be confused with triviality. These exercises begin the process of developing the experiential foundation of the conceptual metaphors and therefore practices of contemporary ritual magic. By excluding the importance of experience in scholarship, study of them may easily overlook the complexity which lies under the surface of these seemingly simple experiential exercises. This would be a grave error, as an under examination of these early experiential practices would then undermine the study of any subsequent practices of ritual magic derived from them. It is only with a strong experience-oriented foundation that complex theories of contemporary magical practices can be built up without them crumbling, as an orientation towards experience is foundational to the practices themselves.

¹⁰⁰ For the element of Earth Kraig suggests one go to a natural space and "sit or lie on the ground so that as much of your skin as possible is touching the ground. [...] [I]n this way there is nothing between the skin and the Earth" (Kraig 2010, 203). In a similar fashion, for the element of Water Kraig suggests one submerge completely in cool Water (Kraig 2010, 361-362). For Fire, they enter a hot sauna or a place with a roaring Fire (Kraig 2010, 434). For Air, they are asked to pay close attention to the process and tactile sensation of breathing (Kraig 2010, 281-282).

¹⁰¹ 'Being-there' and 'being-in-the-world' must be understood generally in the Heideggerian sense of Dasein and in-der-Welt-sein. These concepts were introduced in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (2010) and imply that experiencing beings are always inextricably embedded in and engaged with the world. Specifically, these should be understood as being experienced from the perspective of a body-subject. The concept of the body-subject was introduced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2013) to express the simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity of the body. Here he expands upon Heidegger's conception of being-there and being-in-the-world to include the fundamental role of the body for experiencing beings. We can then say that he articulates the idea of an embodied-being-in-the-world. The study of 4E Cognition and lived religion both draw heavily upon the insights of Merleau-Ponty, pointing towards the potential for these perspectives to be used in tandem.

do this the magician-in-training is asked to imaginally¹⁰² feel the qualities of the elements in one's body. These exercises incorporate somatic sensation, but do so in a way rooted in the imagination, helping to train one's skills for visualization. Visualization refers to the practice of imagining stimuli as if it was present in one's environment using multiple sensory domains, such as tactile, optical, or affective.¹⁰³ They also incorporate affective sensations such as "fluidity" for Water, or "floating giddiness" for Air (Kraig 2010, 204, 282, 362, 435). The final exercise is dedicated to helping teach the magician-in-training to control the various elements. This is done by beginning with the previous exercise of feeling a given element in one's body, but then asks the magician-in-training to place their hands about a foot apart and then visualize a container between them. As one exhales, one visualizes moving the element and its associated sensations from their body into the container. After that one is instructed to repeat the process in reverse, visualizing the element exiting the container and re-entering one's body (Kraig 2010, 204, 283, 362, 435).

After these exercises Kraig provides tests of the magician-in-training's ability to control the elements. These tests utilize the final exercise as a means of manipulating the psychological qualities associated with the elements. The test is designed for times when the magician-in-training is in some state associated with either an excess or lack of a given element. In the case of a lack of an element one repeats the process described in the third exercise. In the situations where there is an excess of an element, one repeats the third exercise, but instead of visualizing the element re-entering their body after they have collected it into the container, the magician-in-training visualizes a black hole into which they throw the container full of the element. The success of the test is determined by observing if the undesirable psychological state associated with a lack or excess of the given element is relieved. These tests illustrate how the body and the sensation based practices of visualization can be linked to abstract psychological states (Kraig 2010, 204-205, 284, 362-363, 435). Kraig's exercises can be seen as exemplary of the others, as they follow the same format.

¹⁰² I have chosen to use the term 'imaginal' in the Hillmanian sense of a realm distinct from either pure subjectivity or objectivity. This is in contrast to the more common term 'imaginary' which often possesses connotations of subjective fantasy or unreality. For more on the imaginal, see Hillman (1979; 1992).

¹⁰³ Conceptions of the imagination, including discussions of visualization in ritual magic (e.g., Luhrman 1985), often overemphasize the role of visual images at the expense of other sensory domains which are equally important to the imagination. As a result I have provided my own definition of visualization which I believe helps to counteract this optical bias.

Like Kraig, Greer (2008) incorporates exercises where one tangibly engages with the elements in a natural setting (Greer 2008, 89-98). He also includes exercises that incorporate similar practices of visualization as Kraig. This is part of a wider ritual called the Sphere of Protection where the elements are spatialized to the four cardinal directions, which will be discussed in detail later. In these practices one visualizes natural settings which contain the elements. Other senses besides the optical and tactile are also visualized. For example, in working with Air one is asked to “Feel the wind and smell the fresh morning air [...]” (Greer 2008, 88), or in working with Water one is asked to “Weave the sounds of water, whether those are rolling waves or the trickling of a spring, and the scents of water into your imagery.” (Greer 2008, 92). This shows that all of the senses can be utilized in practices of visualization.¹⁰⁴ Greer also incorporates the visualization of light in the color associated with the element, which fills and illuminates the body. Simultaneous to this, one is also asked to feel the associated qualities of the elements entering their body. Greer also describes practices which work with balancing the psychological aspects of the elements in a similar way to Kraig in his tests. Greer places a heavy emphasis on the visualization of colored light entering and exiting the body in these balancing exercises (Greer 2008, 88-97).

Deborah Lipp (2023b) also provides a variety of elemental exercises. Similar to Kraig, she provides a series of exercises which involve going into nature to create lived experiences related to the elements (Lipp 2023b, 33-45). Lipp also provides a series of elemental meditations that aid in understanding the elements in an embodied fashion (Lipp 2023b, 96-105). These are similar to many of the exercises previously described, in that they involve visualizing the tangible qualities of the elements. She also provides a series of elemental balancing exercises which are similar to the tests Kraig provides in that they use elements to balance the undesirable effects of other elements (Lipp 2023b, 283-285).

¹⁰⁴ The importance of using all of the sensory modalities in contemporary ritual magic can be traced to Crowley and Mather’s introduction to the *Lesser Key of Solomon* (1904). They claim that the operations of Ceremonial Magic consist of “(1) Sight. The circle, square, triangle, vessels, lamps, robes, implements, etc. (2) Sound. The invocations. (3) Smell. The perfumes. (4) Taste. The Sacraments. (5) Touch. As under (1). (6) Mind. The combination of all these and reflection on their significance” (Mathers and Crowley 2016, 7). The use of all of the senses for experience-oriented practices of magic likely dates back to a similarly prehistoric “ancestral plain” (Clark 2003, 4) which Clark traces the extension of mind back to.

2.2.2 *Encountering Through Embodiment*

The elemental exercises are examples of embodied enactments of metaphors.¹⁰⁵ By creating lived situations of the elements (such as the exercises of going into nature) one gains perceptual experience of their tangible qualities. These experiences can then be used as source material for practices involving visualization of the concrete somatic sensory qualities of the elements. By also engaging the abstract mental qualities associated with the elements simultaneously to their concrete tangible qualities, one can connect the concrete roots of the elemental metaphors to the abstract mental states of the elements. We can see this in Greer who says:

For example, you might decide that as a mage in training, you need more of air's quickness of mind, fire's strength of will, water's desire to learn, and earth's patience. You might equally decide that you need less of air's wandering thoughts, fire's irritability, water's depressed moods, and earth's laziness. (Greer 2008, 107).

He gives an example of invoking or bringing in the quality of clarity which is associated with the element Air. This practice involves visualizing that:

[T]he air around you becomes an ocean of the appropriate color—in this case, yellow, the color of clarity. At the same time, imagine it filled with a mood or feeling appropriate to your intention—in this case, with a sense of perfect stillness and clarity. Then imagine that you're breathing the yellow light and the clarity into your body with each inbreath, and breathing it out with each outbreath, through your solar plexus. As you breathe in, imagine the color and the feeling flowing into your body and filling it completely, so your whole body glows with the color. (Greer 2008, 91)

By involving the body heavily in this process, one not only connects the concrete somatic sensory experiences to the abstract mental ones, but does so in such a way that grounds them in their experience of the body, placing them at the root of the metaphorical formation process. These experiences involve action of the body, be it physical or imaginal. In this way the

¹⁰⁵ For an extended exploration of the conceptual metaphors used in the elemental exercises, see Appendix 7.

elemental exercises can be understood as bodily performances of metaphor (Gibbs 2019). By encountering the elements through these practices repeatedly, one can discover and entrench their meaning through embodied performance of the connection of their abstract and concrete qualities. It is this entrenching process which we will turn our attention to next. The exploration of it will not only require a detailed inspection of how the connection of concepts associated with the elements can be understood, but also a close examination of understanding itself.

2.3 The Looping of Abstract and Concrete

2.3.1 Corresponding Concepts Through Hermetic Hermeneutics

The metaphors of the four elements help to connect the abstract and the concrete, because the metaphors involve various abstract and concrete concepts. The four elements can then be thought of as categories of concepts.¹⁰⁶ The categories are named by a concrete tangible substance.¹⁰⁷ These are substances which all people have experience interacting with tangibly through the body, placing them at the root of the process of forming metaphors described by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 20-22, 123). The substances' tangible properties lead to the concrete concepts within the set contained by the category of the element.¹⁰⁸ These concrete qualities form the basis for the various abstract concepts in the category. The category of the element itself is then an even further conceptual abstraction, as it contains a set of multiple concrete and abstract concepts which are connected with the element.¹⁰⁹ The categories of the elements can be both introspective, being used to describe one's own experience of themselves, as well as perspectival, being used to describe one's experience in the world.¹¹⁰ Since they can be used to describe both inner and outer experiences, the use of the metaphors of the four elements can be considered *interactional*; they mediate perception and action of the self in the world.

¹⁰⁶ Lipp and Kraig both describe them as categories (Lipp 2023b, 17-18; Kraig 2010, 539-542).

¹⁰⁷ Or process in the case of Fire.

¹⁰⁸ For example, the tangibility of the high-energy state of Fire leads to its connection with the concrete concept of heat.

¹⁰⁹ In Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this is what is known as a complex or compound metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 140-147).

¹¹⁰ For example, one could use the category of Fire and its concepts to describe both a situation they perceive (e.g., “that discussion was heated”), as well as their personal experience of the situation (e.g., “what they said made me heated”).

It is important to note that the highly abstract concept representing the category of an element is named after the concrete substance at the root of the process that forms and connects these concepts. This means we have two different things sharing one name: the concrete substance at the root and the highly abstract concept that is the end result.¹¹¹ For clarity, we can refer to the abstract categories as Elemental Fire/Water/Air/Earth and the concrete substances from which these names are derived as Tangible Fire/Water/Air/Earth.¹¹²

It is of crucial importance to note that this distinction between the tangible and elemental version of an element is not always clear and is often left ambiguous (Lipp 2023b 7; Kraig 2010, 540-542; Greer 2008, 120-121). This ambiguity allows one to *utilize* the potential confusion which arises from the double sense of the word. Due to the double meaning, a sort of tricky double entendre is played which connects the highly abstract to the highly concrete and blurs the distinction between the two. The names of elements are then to be simultaneously found both at the lowest most concrete level of the metaphor, as well as at the highest most abstract level. I am inclined to refer to this as a Hermetic trick for two reasons. First, because of the communicative and trickster qualities of the god Hermes (Miller and Clay 2019, 3-9). Second, due to the phrase attributed to Hermes Trismegistus in the *Emerald Tablet* (c. 750-850 CE) “That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above, working the miracles of one (thing)” (Holmyard 1923, 525-526). Abstract things are often metaphorically connected to an upward direction,¹¹³ while concrete things are often connected to a downward direction.¹¹⁴ Given that these are connected through a kind of tricky confusion reminiscent of Hermes, I am inclined to remix the famous phrase attributed to Hermes Trismegistus to fit our present purposes and claim: that which is abstract is like that which is concrete, and that which is concrete is like that which is abstract, working through metaphor as one thing.

This is an example of a logic of correspondence, where the concrete tangible element corresponds with the abstract elemental element. Correspondence is common across a wide

¹¹¹ Put another way, the highest level of abstraction of an element (that of the category of the element, which contains abstract and concrete concepts) shares its name with the tangible substance at the most concrete level.

¹¹² Tangible Water, for example, is the concrete substance at the root of the metaphor of elemental Water. It has concrete qualities such as coolness or malleability. These concrete qualities form the basis for abstract qualities such as adaptability, intuition, and feelings. All of these qualities and tangible Water itself are contained in the category of elemental Water. So at both the most abstract and most concrete levels of the metaphor, we have something named ‘Water.’

¹¹³ Seen in terms such as ‘lofty ideas’ and ‘high level theory.’

¹¹⁴ Seen in phrases such as “the study was rooted in empirical observations” and “what are the grounds for that belief”

range of esoteric currents and is one of the four primary characteristics of esotericism described by Faivre (1994). Besides correspondence, Faivre identifies the three other characteristics of esotericism as living nature, imagination and mediations, and the experience of transmutation (Faivre 1994, 10-14).¹¹⁵ We have already explored the role of the imagination and the mediation of concepts through the four elements in this work, and we will see the significance of the experience of transmutation at its end.¹¹⁶

Correspondence allows the magician to concretely interact with the tangible element as a form of interaction with the concepts in the category of that element, as well as the category of the element as a whole. We can see this in the elemental exercises, where interaction with the tangible element is used to help better understand the elemental element (Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 434; Greer 2008, 89-98; Lipp 2023b, 33-45). It can also be seen in the use of the tangible element in the creation of the ritual space, which will be explored later (Lipp 2003, 97-115; Kraig 2010, 541-544; Greer 2008, 111-115).

This logic of correspondence allows the magician to be able to interact with abstract concepts in a concrete way.¹¹⁷ The logic also implies that the metaphors are bidirectional. This is a departure from traditional Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which states that metaphors are unidirectional and therefore only use the concrete to describe the abstract. This unidirectionality is evidenced by the less common usage of and difficulty in understanding metaphors which use abstract concepts to describe concrete ones.¹¹⁸ It is important to note that esoteric material is often described as difficult to understand,¹¹⁹ but just because it is not commonly understood does

¹¹⁵ Faivre also includes two other optional characteristics of (1) the praxis of the concordance and (2) transmission (Faivre 1994, 14-15).

¹¹⁶ Living nature has already been identified as significant for Wicca and Druidism, but it may be also hidden in the underlying implications of an extended mind. Assumed boundaries of living and nonliving may begin to blur when mind, which is typically associated with living things, is conceived of as capable of extending past the body into the environment. The concept of living nature should be kept in mind during the later exploration of the extension of mind in the ritual space.

¹¹⁷ For example, one can speak of passion as being Fire, encapsulated in the phrase “Passion is Fire.” Due to the double entendre and logic of correspondence, this sentence could equally mean “Passion is (in the category of) Fire,” “Passion is (an instance of) Fire,” or “(tangible) Fire is (a manifestation of) passion.” Yet one need not single out just one of the possible meanings of these phrases, as all three can be the case at once. By using the logic of correspondence one could conclude that: Since passion is in the category of Fire, and as a result passion is an instance of Fire, tangible Fire would therefore be a manifestation of passion.”

¹¹⁸ For example, using the metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH, one can describe a person as warm, seen in phrases such as “she has a warm smile.” This is a relatively common metaphor, and is easily understood. Yet if the direction is reversed and the abstract concept is used to describe the concrete one, comprehensibility degrades. The phrase “it’s an affectionate day outside” will be much less likely to be understood as describing a warm day, than using warmth to describe affection (Chiappe et al. 2003, 87-89; Shen and Porat 2017, 64).

¹¹⁹ Leading to one of the common usages of the term ‘esoteric’ to mean something difficult to understand.

not mean it cannot be understood.¹²⁰ Grady and Ascoli (2017) offer an alternative view to the claim of the inherent unidirectionality of metaphor. Drawing upon findings from Lee and Schwarz's (2012) study on the behavioral effects of metaphor,¹²¹ they conclude that the correlation in experience between metaphorically related concepts begin as bidirectional patterns of association, and these can become unidirectional if they are regularly conceptualized in a specific direction (Grady and Ascoli 2017, 32-33).

Shen and Porat (2017) propose that language plays an important role in defining the directionality of metaphor. They claim that the rendering of metaphorical connections into verbal expressions creates a unidirectionality, as the grammatical structure of the language forces this upon it (Shen and Porat 2017, 67). For example, the word 'is' implies a directionality where the word placed before it will be the abstract concept described by the metaphor, whereas the word preceding it will be the concrete root. This is where the double entendre of the elements comes into play. If the grammatical structure of language forces a direction onto the metaphor, but it is not clear whether the concept 'Fire' refers to the concrete tangible Fire or the abstract elemental Fire, then the phrase "passion is Fire" can remain a bidirectional statement. By remaining bidirectional, the metaphor is not only able to connect the concrete to the abstract (as seen in the common usage of metaphor) but also the abstract to the concrete. This is what allows one to concretely interact with the metaphors present in the various practices found in ritual magic, and therefore to also interact with the concepts which are connected by the metaphor (be they abstract or concrete) in an embodied fashion. Yet before we can examine this embodied interaction with metaphor, we must explore how loops between corresponding polarities are not only relevant for how a magician processes their understanding, but are also embodied in the process of understanding itself.

¹²⁰ The bidirectional use of metaphor may be one of the dominant factors which makes esoteric material so hard to understand, as it reorients the way one normally conceives of metaphor.

¹²¹ This study found that feelings of suspicion were increased by the exposure to fishy smells due to the SUSPICION IS SMELLY metaphor (Lee and Schwarz 2012, 737). Grady and Ascoli (2017) posit that feelings of morality may trigger a sense of either cleanliness or cleanliness, using the MORAL IS CLEAN metaphor, as well as that judgements about similarities may influence assessments of spatial distance, using the SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS metaphor (Grady and Ascoli 2017, 32). This illustrates that abstract concepts may have an effect on the conceptualization of the concrete concepts which are connected to them metaphorically.

2.3.2 *Loopy Understanding*

Ritual magic provides one with a wide range of practices such as the elemental exercises or creation of the ritual space which utilize the concrete as a means of experiencing, interacting, and potentially manipulating abstract and concrete concepts in an embodied fashion. For now, we will focus on the elemental exercises, whose goal is to better understand and integrate the metaphors of the four elements into the magician's perception. It is no surprise that this is accomplished in an embodied and experiential way, as according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory the root of our metaphorical formation process lies in embodied experience (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 20-22, 123). These experiences build up the sensory information which is the source material for metaphorical formation, as well as reinforce connections between abstract and concrete qualities connected to this sensory information. By identifying these connections and then creating embodied experiences which reinforce their association, the elemental exercises provide a set of practices which cyclically entrench the metaphors of the four elements. In other words, by combining the abstract lenses of perception that are the elements with acts of perceiving (which form the basis of these abstract lenses), one taps the very process by which we form the lenses of perception that are conceptual metaphors.

Additionally, embodied experience is used to understand the elements because the process of understanding itself is by nature embodied. This can be seen in the obvious fact that anything we have ever understood has been done from the inescapable position of our being embodied. McGuire (2003) sums up this idea well in saying "Human bodies matter, because those practices—even interior ones, such as contemplation—involve people's bodies" (Mcguire 2003, 15). Johnson (2015) explores the embodied nature of understanding in great detail. He identifies understanding not as an abstract intellectual process, but rather as full bodied engagements with particular aspects of one's environment which are relevant to them.¹²² According to his account, "understanding is our way of making sense of and inhabiting the world in which we live, so that we can go forward with our lives. Understanding is thus less a form of knowing or thinking than it is a matter of experiencing and acting" (Johnson 2015, 3). If understanding can be understood, at least in part, as the process by which we navigate our world

¹²² For an examination of relevance realization, particularly in regards to wisdom, see Vervaeke et al. (2012) and Vervaeke and Ferraro (2013).

from the experience of our embodied perspective, then a most effective way to develop this understanding would be through embodied action and experience.

By creating repeated situations where one can experience the qualities and connections which form the metaphors of the elements through the body, one can begin to view their association as a significant aspect of experience. Johnson goes on to explain that:

We ‘understand’ some object, event, or idea when we grasp its significance for past, present, and future activity and are able to carry that understanding forward into new experience. Therefore, understanding is a form of embodied adaptive and transformative experience, since developing a new understanding actually remakes experience. (Johnson 2015, 3)

Here Johnson has identified a key characteristic of understanding which is exploited by the practices of ritual magic through its embodied experiential practices. There is a cyclical process or loop which occurs between understanding and experience, where experience shapes understanding just as much as understanding shapes experience. We can say then that the metaphors of the elements are both derived from and determine the magician’s experience.¹²³

2.3.3 Feedback Loops in Ritual Understanding

The above description of understanding is similarly described by Seligman (2018) as a looping model of embodiment, which argues “that bodily experience and cognitive meaning making are fundamentally linked to one another through circular and reinforcing patterns of influence” (Seligman 2018, 399). She goes on to clarify that if we are to properly understand this connection between body and meaning, we must not only simply pay attention to how the mind is embodied, or how the body is mindful, but to the reciprocal link between the two. The main focus of our present purposes is the reciprocal link between the abstract and concrete, but other

¹²³ For example, Kraig uses embodied experience in the going into nature exercises to set the somatic sensory foundations of the elements (Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 434). After incorporating abstract conceptualization into the exercises (Kraig 2010, 204, 282, 362, 435) the elements can be used to change one’s mental state as shown in his tests (Kraig 2010, 204-205, 284, 362-363, 435). This change in mental state changes the perspective from which one perceives, therefore determining experience. The same process can be seen in Lipp and Greer’s elemental balancing exercises (Lipp 2023b, 283-285; Greer 2008, 88-97). Likewise by categorizing things in the world through the lens of the elements (Lipp 2023b, 134-223; Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 433-434, 540-542; Greer 2008, 47-49, 89), one remakes their experience through recategorization (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 123).

kinds of reciprocal loops are also at play. This is what is known as grounded cognition, which claims that cognitive processes take place with and through the socio~environmentally embedded body.¹²⁴ Many theories of grounded cognition rely upon an appeal to simulations of the perceptions of previous experience in the process of cognizing.¹²⁵

Seligman then introduces enactivist models of cognition, which builds upon accounts of grounded cognition. Enactivists specifically emphasize that cognition and behavior cannot be separated, and argue that it emerges from the actions and interactions between the body~mind and the socio~material context they are situated in.¹²⁶ Therefore, understanding can arise from multiple sources. It can emerge from the interaction between our body~mind and the environment we are situated in. Likewise, it can emerge from interaction with other individuals who share our context. Therefore we have multiple kinds of loops, between body~mind, between individual~context, and between experience~understanding. Seligman describes these various loops as “mutually reinforcing” (Seligman 2018, 406), meaning that they are entangled in a complex system of dynamic interrelations. She identifies metaphor as a powerful way of

¹²⁴ For more on grounded cognition, see Glenberg and Robertson (2000), Pecher and Zwaan (2005), and Barsalou (2008).

¹²⁵ Simulation can be understood in this context as an imaginal recreation or reenacting of experience. It should not be thought of in terms of a neural reactivation as it is in Lakoff (2014), but simply as an imaginal process. Mechanical explanations of simulation fall outside the scope of this work. The difference between simulation and visualization is that visualization is an intentional act, whereas simulation may or may not be intentional and can occur below the threshold of conscious awareness. Therefore, simulation is implied in visualization, while the inverse is not the case.

¹²⁶ The use of a ‘~’ is to emphasize the complementary nature of the body and mind. The ‘~’ implies the concept of a complementary nature between polarities, and is taken from Kelso and Engstrøm’s *The Complementary Nature* (2006). In this text, they explore how the binary of either/or thinking can be improved through the incorporation of a both/and style of analysis, as well as how the subsequent binary of either/or and both/and thinking can be overcome. One complementary nature they explore which is relevant for our purposes is that of subjectivity~objectivity. For example, the experience of stubbing my toe inextricably combines ‘objective’ physics and ‘subjective’ pain. Kelso and Engstrøm attempt “a theory~practice that not only provides an explanation for its intended subject~object, but also explains its ability to explain its subject~object!” (Kelso and Engstrøm 2006, 13). Following this, in order to understand the practices of the magician, we cannot partition their (or anyone’s) experience exclusively into either a subjective or objective category. Rather, experience can only be properly analyzed when subjectivity~objectivity are understood as deeply entangled and complimentary to one another. Of the many thinkers referenced in the text who allude to this, I was surprised to find the famous naturalist and early conservationism advocate John Muir (1838-1914 CE) absent. As a complimentary scientist, environmental philosopher, and writer, Muir was defined by his experiences in Yosemite Valley, where he would climb to the edge of thousand-foot waterfalls to hear its song, and experience as the Water did as it fell, as well as run directly at bears to experience as they did when charging (Muir 2013, 16; Muir 2003, 98; Burns 2009, 42:00). I was constantly reminded of the theory~practice of his scholarship while reading both *The Complementary Nature* and *The Blind Spot* (2024). I believe he compliments their ideas in this quote with the poetic flair which was inherently intertwined with his experience-oriented approach of natural exploration: “Nature is ever at work building and pulling down, creating and destroying, keeping everything whirling and flowing, allowing no rest but in rhythmical motion, chasing everything in endless song out of one beautiful form into another” (Muir 2019, 61).

encapsulating these various intersecting loops (Seligman 2018, 407). This is because metaphors utilize the bidirectional connections which form the loops between body and mind, abstract and concrete, and inter- and intrapersonal levels of meaning.

Most importantly for our current purposes, after pointing out the connections between embodiment, enaction, and metaphor, Seligman identifies how all of these are utilized in ritual practice. Through engagement with ritual practices, certain bodily experiences and states are created, and these are associated with a shared interpretation amongst individuals (Seligman 2018, 408).¹²⁷ Since the experience and descriptions of abstract attributes can vary greatly from person to person, communicating our experience of them is no easy task. Yet since there is a much greater overlap in our shared experience of concrete tangible things, this allows for greater ease of communication.¹²⁸ Just as the increased ease of description and understanding results in greater ease of interpersonal navigation, the same is true for navigation of intrapersonal situations. By describing abstract experiences with shared concrete experiences, one can use familiar concepts to explore and express abstract experiences more easily with both themselves and others. Seligman then goes on to make the crucial observation that:

Through repeated practice and reinforcement, a tight link is formed between particular states and a particular meaning. In other words, a mental metaphor is created. Such mental metaphors make abstract ideas [...] more concrete. This happens in part because sensory-motor impressions are simulated whenever the metaphor is invoked. Thus, the meaning of being part of the axé,¹²⁹ or having axé within one, reactivates lived experiences of ritual practices, rather than invoking an abstract concept. (Seligman 2018, 408).

Through interaction with others who share an interpretation of the bodily experiences involved in ritual, the meaning is intersubjectively reinforced. This is a large factor in the ability of the three

¹²⁷ For example, one may have an experience with heat and passion during the elemental exercises involving Fire, and these are associated with a culturally shared interpretation of elemental Fire.

¹²⁸ Falling in love can be caused by different attributes for different people, but falling on the ground is caused by gravity for everyone. As a result, it is much easier to talk about why you fell on the ground than why you fell in love.

¹²⁹ Axé is a concept from Candomblé, the highly ritualistic Brazilian religious tradition which Seligman explores in her 2018 work. It is thought of as a life force which animates the universe, which one can be both immersed in as well as take into their body (Seligman 2018, 408).

currents we are examining to engage in discourse with one another, and thus be studied together by examining their use of the four elements.

2.3.4 Perceptual Exercises and Interpretive Drift

The above description of the loop between experience and understanding affecting the way one perceives is very much in line with Luhrmann's (1991) theory of interpretive drift.¹³⁰ She defines interpretive drift as "the slow, often unacknowledged shift in someone's manner of interpreting events as they become involved with a particular activity" (Luhrmann 1991, 322). She identifies various factors which contribute to interpretive drift. One of these is culture, arising from an interaction with others who possess a particular interpretive structure. As one interacts with these others, one's interpretive structure will slowly change to match those that surround them.

Another factor contributing to interpretive drift is experience. As one gains more and more experiences which fall in line with a given interpretation, their interpretation will drift toward an understanding which can make sense of these experiences. In Luhrmann's words, "The experiences give the magical ideas content: the magical ideas make sense of the experience. Intellectual and experiential changes shift in tandem, a ragged co-evolution of intellectual habits and phenomenological involvement" (Luhrmann 1991, 314-315). As an anthropologist, Luhrmann engaged in the same experiential training program that any would-be Wiccan practitioner would engage in. Many of these involved imaginative perceptual exercises, similar to the ones in the elemental exercises involving visualization (Luhrmann 1991, 257-264, 286, 298, 347; Kraig 2010, 204, 282, 362, 435; Greer 2008, 88-97; Lipp 2023b, 96-105, 283-285).¹³¹ As she repeatedly engaged in these practices, she found herself more able to integrate the magical interpretations into her own interpretation.¹³² This integration of the magical interpretation was something which could only be achieved through personal experience,¹³³ for as she says "the crucial element of the persuasiveness of magical ideas is the private phenomenological experience within the practice of magic" (Luhrmann 1991, 315).

¹³⁰ Luhrmann's work is particularly relevant to our purposes here, as she is dealing with practitioners of Wicca.

¹³¹ These are also involved in the creation of the ritual space (Kraig 2010, 87-129; Lipp 2003, 77-108; Greer 2008, 86-127).

¹³² For the sake of our present purposes, this magical interpretation means to interpret experience through the lens of the metaphors of the four elements.

¹³³ An important fact which should be kept in mind by those who advocate for a strict exclusive divide between emic practitioners and etic scholars.

By placing an emphasis on perception in the experiences which are to train one to perceive from the lens of magical interpretation, one more easily integrates these ways of perceiving into one's own perception. In other words, by utilizing perception (the ends) in the training of a way of perceiving (the means), one increases the speed and scale of interpretive drift due to the reinforcing loop of understanding and experience described by Johnson and Seligman. This is precisely what the practices of ritual magic we are examining accomplish. They utilize perception as a means of creating the experiences required for an interpretive drift toward the magical way of perceiving to occur. With the goal, theory, and basic structure of the practices in place, we can now begin a detailed exploration into exactly how this embodied entrainment of perception exhibited by the elemental exercises occurs.

2.4 Elemental Entrainment

2.4.1 *The Positioned Body*

Given the previous examples of their bodily roots, we can observe a variety of ways in which the metaphors of the four elements are grounded in our common embodied experience. This is one of the driving factors in the four elements being so widespread in contemporary ritual magic and contemporary spirituality more generally. Given that the body is one of the aspects of our experience with which we are most familiar, metaphors based primarily on the experience of our own body will more easily become familiar to the embodied individual. Like a musician with their instrument, once familiarity is gained one is able to examine, explore, and express themselves through their expertise of the elements. Yet familiarity with the metaphors of the elements is not a given simply because they are rooted in the body. Continuing the instrumental metaphor, practice is required to attain familiarity and fluency with the tools one employs, and the metaphors of the elements are no different. It may be obvious how one would go about practicing a musical instrument, but how does one go about practicing metaphors? The answer to this also lies in the body. This is why the elemental exercises utilize *embodied* experience.¹³⁴ Since metaphors tap associations formed by embodied experience, to create new associations one must create embodied situations which reinforce these new metaphorical connections.¹³⁵ This

¹³⁴ This can be physical, such as the going into nature exercises (Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 434; Greer 2008, 89-98; Lipp 2023b, 33-43). It can also be imaginal, such as the exercises involving visualization (Kraig 2010, 204-205, 282-284, 362-363, 435; Greer 2008, 88-97; Lipp 2023b, 96-105, 283-285).

¹³⁵ Casasanto (2017) has found that new metaphorical mappings can be formed through repeated association. He claims that the associations which form metaphors are not fixed, but can be strengthened or weakened through

means it is not only the body but also the context it is placed within which contributes to the formation of metaphor.¹³⁶

This is an example of what Kövecses (2010) calls the dual pressure of embodiment and context. He says that “This dual pressure essentially amounts to our effort to be coherent both with the body and culture – coherent both with universal embodiment and the culture-specificity of local culture in the course of metaphorical conceptualization” (Kövecses 2010, 204).¹³⁷ It is not only the presence of things in our experience which shapes our conceptualization, but also the position from which we experience them. This means that it is not only the body, but also the situation it is embedded in which influences the formation of conceptual metaphors, and it is to this situatedness which we will turn to next.

2.4.2 Situated and Simulated Perception

Experience and perception always take place within a situation which can only be encountered through the body. As Tversky (2001) says “Cognition is not just situated, it is also embodied, in ways that are hard to untangle” (Tversky 2001, 202). The elemental exercises provide one with a variety of situations where they can experience and perceive the metaphors of the elements.¹³⁸ For example, Lipp suggests creating situations that incorporate somatic sensory

entrainment. This is because the associations which form new metaphors are not actually new, but rather are part of a preexisting set of potential associations. When one is repeatedly exposed to a given association within this set, it is strengthened. This is repeated until the point where the association is so strong that it becomes the most obvious metaphor for one to use (Casasanto 2017, 57-60).

¹³⁶ To illustrate this let us examine various metaphors relating to somatic sensory experience and understanding. One of the primary ways we gain understanding of the world is through somatic sensory experience. This leads to various metaphors connecting understanding and sensory experience. One example is UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, seen in phrases such as “I see your point,” “It looks different from my point of view,” “What’s your outlook on this issue?” and “I view it differently.” Another is UNDERSTANDING IS HEARING, seen in phrases such as “I hear your criticisms.” Haman (2014) studied various linguistic groups, and found that different groups place differing emphasis on which sense is most commonly used to express understanding. In English (and many other languages) the most common metaphor is UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, yet in the languages of aboriginal Australians and Mayans the most common metaphor is UNDERSTANDING IS HEARING. This is because a set of associations between the five senses and understanding is preexisting due to the nature of our embodiment and the fact that we use our senses to understand the world. The cultural relativity of the language one is exposed to places particular emphasis upon one of the sensory associations within this set. As one is repeatedly exposed to the metaphorical association present in their language group, it strengthens the association until the point that an individual will tend to think in terms of that association. This leads to the English speaker tending to conceive of understanding in terms of seeing, whereas the speaker of aboriginal Australian or Mayan languages will tend to conceive of understanding in terms of hearing (Haman 2014, 20-22).

¹³⁷ This means that by engaging in discourse, the three currents we are examining will converge upon similar interpretations of the four elements as a result of the pressure of context.

¹³⁸ These situations can be physical, as illustrated by the embodied going into nature exercises (Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 434; Greer 2008, 89-98; Lipp 2023b, 33-45). They can also be imagined, such as those created through visualization exercises (Kraig 2010, 204, 282-283, 362, 435; Lipp 2023b, 96-105). Additionally, different kinds of

perception where one observes the heat of flames for Fire, gazes at and enters pools or rivers for Water, and buries one's feet in dirt for Earth. They also include observation of the abstract qualities of the elements, such as observing the “will” of the Fire as it spreads, the adaptable “flow” of the Water, and feeling of being “planted” in the Earth (Lipp 2023b 35-41). By creating situations involving the body to understand and entrain the metaphors of the elements, one gains sensory experiences of both the concrete tangible and abstract mental qualities of the elements together.

This reflects Tversky’s claim that “The interactions of the body in the external world not only bias perception and action but also craft symbolic perception and action, and form the basis for abstract thought” (Tversky 2001, 202). This is an idea that is central to the claims of metaphorical embodiment. In his review of experimental studies examining metaphorical embodiment, Khatin-Zadeh (2023) summarizes it using the metaphor of **UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING**,¹³⁹ saying:

The main idea of metaphorical embodiment is that [...] the same sensorimotor networks that are employed to do the action of grasping are recruited to understand the target of the metaphor (understanding an idea) in terms of its base (grasping a physical object).
(Khatin-Zadeh 2023, 585)

This means that when we use metaphor to express abstract concepts in terms of concrete concepts, we employ the memory¹⁴⁰ of the experiences which formed our conception of the concrete thing at the root of the metaphor. One proposal as to how this comes about is that concrete experiences are directly simulated during the process of abstract conceptualization through metaphor (Jamrozik et al. 2016, 1082). This means that when we engage concrete concepts during abstract conceptualization, we mentally reenact the situations and sensory experience which formed the concrete concept being engaged at the root of the metaphor. This view is supported by a wide range of experimental findings from areas such as language,

situations can be combined. This is seen in exercises that balance the elements using visualization to change one’s mental state, thereby using imaginal situations to alter one’s perspective of their lived situation (Kraig 2010, 204-205, 284, 362-363, 435; Greer 2008, 88-97; Lipp 2023b, 283-285).

¹³⁹ Seen in phrases such as “I can’t grasp what you’re saying,” and “I have a firm grasp on the topic.”

¹⁴⁰ Memory, situation, simulation, and other psychological terms must be understood in their folk sense. Psychological terms are inherently unfixed in meaning, and this malleability makes them apt for usage in metaphor.

behavioral, and neuroimaging studies (Khatin-Zadeh 2023).¹⁴¹ By engaging with the concrete roots of the metaphors of the elements, one expands and embellishes the reservoir of memories which they employ when using the metaphors of the elements.

An important feature of embodied experience is that it is multimodal. It consists of a variety of sensory (both somatic and affective) and social domains. Memories of concrete experiences will then also be multimodal.¹⁴² In the elemental exercises one engages the metaphors of the elements across multiple sensory modalities.¹⁴³ Barsalou (2009) claims that abstract concepts can be viewed as being grounded in complex simulations of multimodal situations. This means that when one uses metaphor to describe abstract concepts, they will be simulating concrete concepts at the root of the metaphor, using the various modalities through which they experienced the stimuli which created the concrete concept. Barsalou goes on to illustrate how people tend to focus on the physical aspects (such as objects) of a situation when representing concrete concepts, while they focus on other aspects (such as introspections) when representing abstract concepts (Barsalou 2009, 241). Barsalou claims that the meaning of both abstract and concrete concepts are always situated because they arise from perceptual experiences which can only exist within a situation. He states that “If perceptions take the form of situations, and if conceptual representations simulate perceptions, then conceptual representations should take the form of perceived situations” (Barsalou 2009, 242). The elemental exercises provide experiential situations which contain both tangible elements and introspections simultaneously, and so can be used for both concrete and abstract conceptualization. By placing emphasis on the various modalities which compose embodied experience, the elemental exercises create multifaceted situations which expand the source material of and strengthen the connections which form the metaphors of the elements.

¹⁴¹ These studies should be understood as exemplary, not explanatory. Explanation of the functional mechanisms of metaphor falls outside the scope of this work.

¹⁴² This was also suggested by Bourdieu (2019), who claims that all of the senses are involved in both memory and embodiment of practices.

¹⁴³ In the elemental exercises, one is asked to visually, tactically, auditorily, and olfactorily observe (or imagine) the sensation of the element. On top of this, they are also asked to engage more abstract affective sensation, such as being “fluid and responsive” (Greer 2008, 92) for Water. This shows the sensory modalities utilized are not just somatic, but also affective.

2.4.3 *Being in a Situation*

The elemental exercises create lived situations related to the metaphors of the four elements. Not only are the various concrete and abstract aspects of the metaphors engaged in these experiences, but this also provides one with a sense of being-there within a situation conceived as representing the elements. This is important because as Barsalou says:

[A] situated conceptualization places the conceptualizer directly in the respective situation, creating the experience of being there (Barsalou, 2002). By reenacting agentive actions and interoceptive states during the process of representing categories, situated conceptualizations create the experience of the conceptualizer being in the situation. The situation is not represented as detached and separate from the conceptualizer. The conceptualizer is in the representation. (Barsalou 2009, 246)

According to Barsalou's account, when one simulates the concrete experiences at the base of a metaphor they may not only simulate the perceptions derived from various modalities, but also simulate the sense of being in the situation itself. By engaging in exercises which focus on perceiving the various aspects of the metaphors through multiple modalities, and doing this in the form of lived situations, the elemental exercises provide holistic experiential foundations for the metaphors of the elements. Through repetition, "the components of the situated conceptualization become entrenched in the respective simulators, as do associations between these components. Over time, the situated conceptualization becomes so well established in memory that it comes to mind automatically as a unit" (Barsalou 2009, 246). By repeatedly experiencing situations which connect the various aspects of the metaphors of the elements, one is more easily able to remember the metaphors and the various concepts to which they connect. Being more accessible in memory allows the metaphors of the elements to be more easily employed to navigate the self in the world.

The concreteness of the elemental exercises also aids in the entrenching of the metaphors into memory. Schwanenflugel (1991) found that it is much easier to remember situations involving concrete concepts than it is for abstract ones. She claims one possible reason for this is that abstract concepts might be connected to a wider range of situations than concrete

concepts.¹⁴⁴ Since it is more difficult to retrieve situations related to abstract concepts from memory, repeated experience of situations entrenches connections between the various abstract and concrete concepts involved in that experience. Therefore, the elemental exercises help to provide concrete situations for abstract concepts as a result of them being consciously associated in the experience. Being connected to a concrete situation, the abstract concepts will be more accessible to memory.

The primacy of concreteness in memory is further illustrated by Schwanenflugel and Stowe's (1988) observation that concrete words are comprehended faster than abstract words, and Wattenmaker and Shoben's (1987) observation that memory of concrete words is better than abstract words.¹⁴⁵ This is also reflected in Niedenthal et al.'s (2005) study, who explored how people generate information about both abstract and concrete concepts.¹⁴⁶ What they found was that for concrete concepts, participants produced word associations which were essentially the same as the words used in their description of images. However, for abstract concepts, the properties identified were essentially the same as the ones produced in word association (Niedenthal et al. 2005, 200). What this seems to imply is that concrete concepts are more likely to invoke an image of a situation, whereas abstract concepts are more likely to invoke words associated with the concept. Given the double entendre of the names of the elements, we can say that the elemental exercises take this idea and loop it back around. By entrenching a word association between the abstract concepts and the name of the elemental category (which is named after a concrete substance), and creating situations where this association is entrenched and connected to perceptual experience, one is now able to more easily invoke a situational image for the abstract concepts of the elements.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ For example, it is much more difficult to think of situations involving truth than it is to think of situations involving chairs (take a moment to try this yourself). Although an exemplary situation for truth may eventually come to mind, such as a protest or courtroom, exemplary situations for chairs, such as dining rooms or classrooms, will likely come to mind much more rapidly (Barsalou 2009, 253).

¹⁴⁵ This is in line with Lakoff and Johnson's claim that concrete concepts are more easily understood than abstract concepts, which is why concrete concepts are most often used as the base of metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 57-58, 110).

¹⁴⁶ One group was asked to come up with an image of the concepts and describe it, a second was asked to make word associations related to the concept, and a third was asked to list properties which are true about the concepts.

¹⁴⁷ For example, the concept of passion, being abstract, should be more likely to generate word associations. If the word 'Fire' (which can describe a concrete substance) has been entrained as associated with the concept of passion, and concrete concepts are more likely to invoke an image of a situation, then the concept of passion should now be more likely to invoke an image of a situation related to Fire due to its entrained association. Also, since the elemental exercises provide concrete situations related to Fire where the abstract concept of passion is also engaged, the connection of the abstract concept and the concrete situation is further entrenched.

This is in line with Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings' (2005) hypothesis that abstract and concrete concepts share common situational content, but differ in what they focus on in the situation, with concrete concepts focusing on objects and abstract concepts focusing on introspections (Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings 2005, 134). We can see this in the elemental exercises, where focus is placed both on the concrete and abstract qualities of the elements in the same situation (Kraig 2010, 204-205, 282-284, 362-363, 435; Greer 2008, 88-97; Lipp 2023b, 33-43, 96-105, 283-285). They further propose that due to these different foci, abstract concepts are more complex and less localized in situational content than concrete concepts (Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings 2005, 134). This implies that since there is a much wider range of situations to which abstract concepts could be applied, specific situations related to them tend to be less accessible.¹⁴⁸ Yet because abstract concepts are grounded in situations, they can potentially still be simulated using the modalities which compose the sensory-based simulations of concrete concepts. What this means is that even though abstract concepts may be less likely to simulate a situation due to their wide range of situational applicability, this does not preclude them from being simulated.

Take the trope present in many meditation and relaxation exercises of imagining oneself on a beach. The beach is a concrete situation which is associated with the abstract concept of relaxation, so by imagining oneself on a beach one not only simulates the concrete aspects of the situation (such as the waves or the sun), but also the abstract aspects (such as feelings of relaxation or peace). This same concept applies to the elemental exercises. By creating situations which link the concrete and abstract aspects of the elements, one can simulate the concrete aspects of the situation as a means of triggering a simulation of the abstract aspects also present in the situation. If the use of metaphor involves simulation of situations, this would strengthen one's ability to use the metaphors of the elements. Not only this, but they could also use these situations as a means of adapting their own psychological state, as one does with the "imagine yourself on a beach" situation in relaxation exercises. We can see this in the balancing exercises (Greer 2008, 88-97; Kraig 2010, 204-205, 284, 362-363, 435; Lipp 2023b, 283-285). In Lipp's, one visualizes the somatic sensory qualities of an element filling the body, as well as colored light associated with it. Simultaneous to this, one is asked to feel the associated psychological effects of the element. For Air these are described as freshness and clearness of thought. For Fire

¹⁴⁸ This idea is also explored in Niedenthal et al. 's (2005) study.

it is described as an energizing quality which fills one with vigor and aliveness (Lipp 2023b, 284). For Water it is described as a deep feeling of openness, love, and intuition. For Earth it is described as a sense of stability and peace which gives a feeling of strength and certainty as well as a connection to the body and physicality in general (Lipp 2023b, 285). After each element is introduced into the body, the practitioner says “I am [Element]” (Lipp 2023b, 285) to confirm the idea that they are themselves composed of the elements. After this, a moment is taken to visualize the elements coexisting in the body. After all four elements have entered the body and are visualized coexisting the practitioner says “I am whole. I am Balanced” (Lipp 2023b, 285). This confirms that it is the balanced coexistence of the elements in the self which creates a sense of wholeness .

2.4.4 Situating Simulations and Simulating Situations

So far we have been speaking of the elemental exercises as if they are all the same. Yet as we saw in our previous exploration of these exercises, there are multiple different kinds which one engages in. These exercises progress in such a way where they begin with extremely concrete physical exercises, and as new exercises are introduced they become more imaginal, but crucially no less embodied. The early elemental exercises involve tangibly experiencing the elements through embodied activities in the world so that one gains concrete somatic sensory experience of the elements and their associated concrete qualities (Greer 2008, 89-98; Kraig 2010, 203, 281, 361, 434; Lipp 2023b, 33-45). Since these experiences engage multiple sensory modalities and provide lived situations related to the elements, the perceptions deriving from these situations can then become source material which is utilized in the elemental exercises involving visualization. In these visualization exercises, one simulates the previously perceived concrete qualities of the elements using the imagination. In these, one not only simulates seeing an element entering their body, they also simulate a felt sensation of the concrete qualities associated with the element. In later exercises one also incorporates the abstract qualities of the elements into the visualization, and simulates their affective sensations. This could be “becoming so solid and firm that you could resist the mightiest force in the universe” (Greer 2008, 97) for Earth, or “so fluid and responsive that nothing can contain or restrict you” (Greer 2008, 92) for Water. It is important to note that simulation of perception in both metaphorical processing and

practices of visualization must be done using the imagination, as the sensory stimuli is not physically present and so can only be imagined.

These imaginal practices of visualization go beyond the simulations engaged when processing metaphor. When processing metaphor, the fact that one is simulating a situation may not necessarily be present in one's conscious awareness. Yet when one intentionally visualizes a situation and the perceptions which accompany it, the fact that one is simulating a situation *is* consciously apparent. This is in line with Barsalou et al. (2005), who says that "Mental imagery differs from conceptual processing in that the simulations underlying imagery may typically be conscious, whereas the simulations underlying conceptual processing may often be unconscious" (Barsalou et al. 2005, 24). We can say that the conscious process of creating imaginal situations through visualization results in simulations which have a sense of being-there in the situation, while metaphorical processing usually lacks this being-there quality due to the situation being simulated unconsciously.¹⁴⁹ These practices of visualization can also be considered embodied simulations, due to the fact that one experiences the concrete qualities of the elements in an imaginal way which is felt by bodily sensations, amongst other sensory modalities. This is in line with Gibbs (2005) who identifies the experience of bodily sensations activated during embodied simulation as the result of an imaginative process (Gibbs 2005, 66-67).

From the previous discussion, we can see that the practices of visualization in the elemental exercises can be considered (1) the result of the process of simulation, which (2) involve multiple sensory and introspective modalities, and (3) is a conscious activity which has the sense of being-there that accompanies all conscious activities. Given that the last two items meet our criteria for a situation (that it engages multiple modalities and has a sense of being-there), we can say that the elemental exercises involving practices of visualization creates a new kind of situation: a situation of simulation. If simulations are derived from situations, then we can say that these practices wrap this process back into itself, creating situations which simulate situations. This cyclically entrenches both situations involving the elements and the process of simulating the elements together. Therefore, by engaging embodied simulation through the imaginal practices of visualization, the elemental exercises train the very imagination which allows simulation, and thus metaphoric processing, to occur in the first place.

¹⁴⁹ We can apply this principle not only to the optical qualities of imagined mental images, but also their tactile and other somatic and affective sensory qualities.

In light of Barsalou's (2009) proposal that the reenactive process of simulations that underlie knowledge are approximately the same as those involved in mental imagery, we can say that this cyclical entrenching process of situating simulations and simulating situations would be an extremely effective way of gaining knowledge, understanding, and experience of the metaphors of the four elements. This helps to explain the prominence of visualization in the practices of contemporary ritual magic. Since the imaginative process of simulation is at work when one utilizes their knowledge of the elements, and since simulations derive from situations, creating imaginal situations which simulate the elements is not only training one in knowledge of the elements, but is training them through the very imaginal process which enables access to knowledge in the first place. This would mean that the practices of ritual magic involving visualization not only provide knowledge about the elements, but may also provide experiential knowledge about the very process of knowing itself.

2.5 From the Body to the World

In this chapter, we have identified the embodied roots of the metaphors of the four elements, explored how understanding and experience are deeply intertwined, and examined how this entanglement is exploited by the elemental exercises. Yet conceptual metaphors need not be exclusively confined to our bodily container, but can be extended out into the environment. The body is always in the world, and being that the metaphors of the four elements are used to interact with the world, they must be able to extend into it. Contemporary ritual magic shows a keen awareness of this, exhibited by one of their most significant and foundational practices: the creation of the ritual space.

3

The World

3.1 Enchanting the World

3.1.1 Fundamentals of Ritual Space Creation

Ceremonial Magic, Wicca, and Druid Magic all have specific ritualized methods of creating a ritual space.¹⁵⁰ The elements are a central component of creation of this space. This is exemplified by Lipp's claim that "These are the building blocks of the universe. This is Air and Fire and Water and Earth. From these, all creation proceeds, and without these, creation cannot be" (Lipp 2003, 88). Although there are many differences between the practices of our three currents, they share a general structure where commonalities can be found in both the design and method of construction of the ritual space.¹⁵¹ Two main themes can be observed. The first is that the space is a container with a circular shape, leading it to be commonly referred to as a "magic circle" (Lipp 2003, 99, 185; Kraig 2010, 378).¹⁵² The second is that this circle is partitioned into

¹⁵⁰ These are called The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBRP) in Ceremonial Magic (Kraig 2010, 87-129), Casting the Circle and Calling the Quarters in Wicca (Lipp 2003, 77-108), and The Sphere of Protection and Grove of the Druids in Druid Magic (Greer 2008, 86-127).

¹⁵¹ This then allows them to be studied together.

¹⁵² The creation of a protective space has been a recurring feature of ritual and magical practices for millennia, the oldest records having their origins in the Stone Age (Sidky 2010, 81). It can be clearly seen as far back as the Old Kingdom of the ancient Egyptians, who were very fond of the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor we will be exploring later. In *The Coffin Texts* (c. 2100-1600 BCE) spell 377 and 535 describes the creation of a protective boundary for the dead using symbols and words of power (Faulkner 1973, 11-12, 155). Chapter 151 of *The Book of the Dead* (c. 1550-50 BCE) also describes this (Faulkner et al. 1994, 198-200), and this chapter was inscribed on magic bricks incorporated into the tombs (Scalf et al. 2017, 75, 312-314). In later Egyptian magical practices, this protective boundary takes a circular form (Borghouts 1978, 15, 101), which may derive from the earlier practice of encircling (Kousoulis 2001, 34). In Mesopotamia, the use of flour to draw a protective circle in ritual can be seen in *The Surpu Series* (c. 900-500 BCE) (Wiggermann 1992, 111, 121) and *The Magical Ceremony Maglû* (c. 700 BCE) (Abusch 2015, 368). As syncretization with Egyptian practices occurred in the Greco-Roman world, the drawing of the magic circle was adopted. *The Greek Magical Papyri* (c. 200 BCE - 400 CE) shows the continued use of magic circles (Betz 1986, 48-55, 141) and its creation could have been an aspect of practices implied by the "do the usual" headings present in many of the rituals (Skinner 2017, 82-89). In the Islamic world, the drawing of a magic circle can be found in *The Picatrix* (c. 900-1000 CE) (Attrell and Porreca 2019, 224-225). The practice was then taken up in Europe by way of Islamic sources, as evidenced by texts such as *The Lesser Key of Solomon* (c. 1300-1400 CE) (Mathers and Crowley 2016, 38), *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (c. 1400-1500 CE) (Mathers 1948, 98), *The Heptameron* (1588 CE) (Abano 2014, 10-12), and *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (1531 CE) (Agrippa and Tyson 2009, 134-135). It is predominantly from the European and Egyptian sources which the Golden Dawn pulled from in their incorporation of magic circles into their practice (Asprem 2015, 383).

quadrants which correspond to the four elements and are aligned with the cardinal directions.¹⁵³ These two aspects of magical practice are no new invention, being some of the oldest practices in the historical record.¹⁵⁴

3.1.2 *How the Circle Becomes Magic*

The three practices of creating the ritual space not only share these general aspects, but also many specific methods which are used to accomplish them. The circle which is drawn demarcates the circumference of the ritual space, and defines a protective boundary within which ritual activity can occur (Lipp 2003, 96; Greer 2008, 64; Kraig 2010, 229; Regardie and Greer 2016, 502).¹⁵⁵ The magician circumambulates the circle, drawing it either with their hand or a ritual tool. The drawing of the circle is visualized as a line of light (Lipp 2003, 109-115; Greer

¹⁵³ The significance of the cardinal directions is also one of the oldest aspects of magical and ritual practice, and its oldest recorded use also has its origins in the Stone Age (Cooper 2010, 17). The ancient Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* (c. 2400-2300 BCE) invoke the cardinal directions and Gods associated with them to protect the pharaoh (Allen 2015, 45-50). *The Book of the Dead* identifies their importance in the navigation of the afterlife (Lucarelli and Stadler 2023, 11, 50, 172, 350; Scalf et al. 2017, 12, 78-79, 311-314), and the magic bricks previously described were also incorporated into the tomb according to the cardinal directions (Scalf et al. 2017, 311-314). The importance of performing specific magical actions toward the cardinal directions and varying godforms associated with them was present in the Greco-Roman period, and can be found in the *Greek Magical Papyri* in a variety of rituals (Betz 1986, 99-103, 135-145). In this text we also see the four elements mentioned as magically significant fundamental substances in the ritual invocations of *The Mithras Liturgy* (Betz 1986, 48). In *Tetrabiblos* (c. 140 CE) Ptolemy (c. 100-170 CE) connects the Aristotelian qualities of the elements to the winds of the cardinal directions in the same order used in the practices we are exploring (Ptolemy 1940, 19). The connection of the four elements to the cardinal directions for the purpose of magical invocation is made in *The Picatrix* (Attrell and Porreca 2018, 72-75). In Europe, the control over the elements through ritual magic and the invocation of specific entities associated with the cardinal directions can be found in *The Lesser Key of Solomon* (Mathers and Crowley 2016, 35, 42). This magical control over entities connected to the cardinal directions is likewise described in Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Here we also find other entities associated with the four elements, as well as the same angels assigned to the cardinal directions which are used in the Golden Dawn and Ceremonial Magic's LBRP, albeit in a different order (Agrippa and Tyson 2009, 532).

¹⁵⁴ From early on we can see the importance of both protective containers and the cardinal directions to ritual and magical practices. The importance of the protective container is likely connected to the importance to survival of protecting the container of the body. The protective container is perceived through the container schema and the cardinal directions are perceived through the front-back and right-left schemas. As time went on, the connection of the cardinal directions and elements through their shared numerical quantity-quality eventually led to these being blended together. This then led to the blending of the protective container and the elemental-cardinal directions through their shared perceived importance for ritual. The perceived importance is greatly increased by the antiquity of these practices. The explanation of their antiquity and continued use can potentially be aided by considering the embodied quality of the container, front-back, and left-right schemas. We have a single body which has both a predominantly symmetrical (left-right) and non symmetrical (front-back) axis (the up-down axis combines symmetry and non-symmetry). As time went on, the unitary container of the magic circle was blended with the quaternary blend of front/back-right/left, east/west/south/north, and Air/Water/Fire/Earth. The combination of these in the ritual space reflects the body, as the quaternary and unity are blended in it as well.

¹⁵⁵ Both Lipp and Greer specifically describe the circle as a container (Lipp 2003, 96; Greer 2008, 64).

208, 88; Kraig 2010, 115-117).¹⁵⁶ The quadrants of the circle are demarcated and aligned to the cardinal directions (Lipp 2003, 124-128; Greer 2008, 114; Kraig 2010, 115-116). This demarcation and assignment is accomplished through multiple methods. The first is the drawing and visualization of symbols in each of the quadrants. These are drawn in a specific fashion which holds symbolic meaning.¹⁵⁷ The second is invocation of the elements via entities associated with them (such as Gods, elementals, or angels) using acts of visualization, gesture, and speech acts (Lipp 2003, 114-121; Greer 2008, 86-98; Kraig 2010, 120-122).¹⁵⁸ Unless specifically interacting with the elements in the quadrants on the periphery of the space, the magician stands at the center of the circle where an altar is also placed. This centered place of balance represents Spirit. On this altar are material instantiations of the elements in a literal¹⁵⁹ or metonymic¹⁶⁰ form, which are ritually consecrated and aligned to the cardinal directions (Lipp 2003, 86-92; Greer 2008, 111-115; Kraig 2010, 90-92). Although a ritual in and of itself, the creation of the ritual space can be understood as a preparatory measure for subsequent ritual activity and is to be repeated as an act of closing the space when the ritual activities have concluded (Lipp 2003, 229-246; Greer 2008, 115-117; Kraig 2010, 391-397, 457).

From the two seemingly simple components of drawing a circle and partitioning it into four, some fundamental aspects of ritual practice can be examined. First, by drawing a circle the magician has created a containing space which they inhabit.¹⁶¹ Then by assigning the four

¹⁵⁶ It may also be materially drawn, such as in the case of Wicca who draws it on the ground with salt (Lipp 2003, 110-111).

¹⁵⁷ In both Wicca and Ceremonial Magic, the symbol of the pentagram is used. Its use in ritual magic practices can be traced back to *The Lesser Key of Solomon* (Crowley and Mathers 2016, 38-39). The symbol itself can be seen in early Christianity as a symbol of the wounds of Christ and the work of the Creator (Urmă 2016, 2), by the Pythagoreans as a sign of membership for their order (Noura 2021, 18), all the way back to its first documented usage in Mesopotamia around 3500 BCE (Urmă 2016, 2). The pentagram has also been directly connected with the body, seen in the classic engraving from *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* in which the two are superimposed (Agrippa 1651, 266; see Appendix 3). The four elements are assigned to the lower vertices of the pentagram, with Spirit connected to the top vertex. The use of the pentagram in ritual changes depending on the way it is drawn, with movement toward the vertex of an element implying invocation (bringing in) and movement away implying banishment (pushing away) (Lipp 2003, 83-85; Kraig 2010, 392-394; see Appendix 5). In Druid Magic, different symbols are used for the various elements, with a clockwise drawing motion implying invocation and counterclockwise implying banishment (Greer 2008, 87-96; see Appendix 6).

¹⁵⁸ The visualizations reflect the abstract and concrete qualities of the element being invoked.

¹⁵⁹ Incense for Air, candle for Fire, Water for Water, and salt for Earth.

¹⁶⁰ Dagger for Air, wand for Fire, cup for Water, and pentacle for Earth.

¹⁶¹ One difference between the containment of the embodied magician and the ritual space is that the body is perceived as a container *of* the self, whilst the ritual space is a container *for* the self. The space within the container of the embodied self is often described as an inner space, seen in such phrases as “I have lots of passion within me.” The space within the container of extended space is often described as outer, seen in the astronomical term ‘outer space.’

elements to the quadrants of this space, the magician spatializes the theory of four balanced elements in an evenly distributed (or balanced) manner in the space.¹⁶² Given that the four elements are invoked or brought into the circular container of the ritual space, we can think of the ritual space as a container for the four elements.¹⁶³ So with the embodied magician within the ritual space, we now have a container of the four elements within a container for the four elements.¹⁶⁴

3.2 A World of Metaphor

3.2.1 *The Living Out of Metaphor*

The ritual space itself extends concepts which might normally be viewed as ‘in the head’ into the world. It allows one to act upon the elements, in a concrete sense of tangibly performing actions with them,¹⁶⁵ but also in an abstract sense.¹⁶⁶ By utilizing the connections formed in the elemental exercises between the concrete and abstract concepts associated with the elements, ritualistic interaction with the concrete tangible forms of the elements is also an interaction with the abstract concepts which are represented by them.¹⁶⁷ We can consider these ritualistic actions as an instance of metaphorical performance, which is a living out of metaphor.¹⁶⁸ This living out of metaphor through ritual is most fitting given that the metaphors of the four elements are used to help better navigate our experience of life. In light of Lakoff and Johnson’s insight that we live by metaphors, utilizing experiences of living through these metaphors via performance would be

¹⁶² The previously stated claims about the elemental exercises creating embodied situations related to the elements also applies to the ritual space. One difference is that while the elemental exercises created situations for each element individually, the ritual space creates situations which incorporate all four elements, acting as an exemplar situation of their interrelation and balance.

¹⁶³ This idea may ring familiar, as in our exploration of the elemental exercises we saw that the embodied self is also conceived of as a container of the four elements.

¹⁶⁴ This idea of larger things reflecting smaller things is very common in magical worldviews, and is often referred to as the macrocosm reflecting the microcosm. The human body is considered to be a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm (Greer 2017, 43-54), and so is the ritual space (Lipp 2003, 95; Kraig 2010, 623).

¹⁶⁵ In the form of objects and areas of the space connected to them.

¹⁶⁶ For an extended exploration of the conceptual metaphors of the ritual space, see Appendix 8.

¹⁶⁷ Due to this one can “cause change in conformity with Will” (Crowley 1994, xii) related to these abstract concepts.

¹⁶⁸ This falls in line with Gibbs’ (2019) statement that “Metaphor in human experience should always be understood as an action (i.e., something that people do) rather than as knowledge people possess or just a specific way of using language. We do not just use metaphors for communicative purposes, but live metaphorically in various ways at different times. Metaphorical performance is not simply the enactment of a previously understood metaphorical thought or intention. Instead, metaphorical performances involve people discovering metaphorical meanings through their bodily actions as these unfold over time given specific adaptive goals and real-world ecologies” (Gibbs 2019, 33).

a most apt approach for practicing and better understanding how to apply these metaphors in our everyday lived experience. If experience is how metaphor is formed, experience should be foundational to the process of learning metaphors; if metaphor is used as a means to interact with the world, interaction with the world should be utilized in refining the skill of using metaphor; if metaphor is not just something we think but also something we do, doing and thinking should be united through metaphor in the grasping of metaphor.¹⁶⁹

3.2.2 Extending Metaphor into the World

Gibbs (2019) claims that metaphors emerge in a way which is always embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended, and therefore are “distributed across brains, bodies, and real-world ecologies” (Gibbs 2019, 35). This means that metaphors are not just something that goes on ‘inside our heads’ but rather extends to our body, its actions, and the things in the world with which the body interacts.¹⁷⁰ The recognition that not all cognitive processes can be confined to the skull has greatly aided the reconsideration of material culture in the study of lived religion. Day (2004) claims that external representations and the practices that arise from them are both sculpted by and sculpt the activities of the mind. In other words, they are designed according to and constrained by the nature of the functions of the mind, while also expanding the functions which the mind can accomplish.¹⁷¹ Given this bidirectional relationship of mind and artifacts, Day poses the question:

¹⁶⁹ Gibbs’(2019) claim that “Moving the body and being in the world enhances metaphorical thinking” and that “Metaphorical performances are always acts of discovery” (Gibbs 2019, 43) helps to further elucidate why the use of bodily experience would be used so extensively in the practices of ritual magic.

¹⁷⁰ This means the intentional actions which result from an interaction of body and world can not only be ways of engaging with metaphor, but are metaphors in and of themselves. This leads to Gibbs’ conclusion that “metaphorical thinking and metaphor performance must be characterized as enactive (i.e., real-world or imaginative body actions), embedded (i.e., through interactions with real-world objects and environments), and extended (i.e., when metaphorical thinking is extended in an interactive manner between brains, bodies, to specific ecological contexts)” (Gibbs 2019, 36).

¹⁷¹ Day (2004) claims that material culture is not just “quaint ethnographic window dressing” which decorate the ‘real’ cognitive processes of the brain, but rather are “central components of the relevant machinery of religious thought” (Day 2004, 101). He says that “By introducing tangible features of the world that can be physically manipulated and tracked in real-time, the cognitive scaffolding afforded by religious material culture seems tailor made for allowing people to do the ‘kinds of things they are naturally good at doing’ (i.e., recognizing patterns, modeling simple worldly dynamics, and manipulating objects). In principle, the strategic use of structured environments (e.g., ‘sacred spaces’) and external representations (e.g., statues or likenesses of the gods) could put individual human agents in a position to better utilize their basic perceptual, motor, and social cognitive skills in these domains” (Day 2004, 117).

So while it is correct to insist that these cognitive artifacts have been sculpted by the features and constraints of the mind's design, is it possible that we are missing something crucial when we don't concurrently observe how this kind of scaffolding allows us to think things that we could not otherwise contemplate? (Day 2004, 114)

Winter and Matlock (2017) also address the importance of cultural representations which are external to the individual in the processing of metaphor.¹⁷² They, like Gibbs (2019), claim that external representations of metaphor (such as artifacts, gesture, and linguistic expression) are not mere reflections of conceptual associations, but rather play an active role in supporting and enhancing metaphor (Winter and Matlock 2017, 99). The ritual space utilizes the benefits of extending metaphor into objects and space to better understand and interact with the metaphors of the four elements.

The various ideas described above draw heavily upon Extended Mind Theory. In their groundbreaking paper *The Extended Mind* (1998), Clark and Chalmers propose that cognitive processes cannot be confined to the brain, but rather can extend into the environment by way of tools, artifacts, and other external resources.¹⁷³ We can understand the ritual space and the objects that populate it as an extended form of mind. This extension is accomplished primarily through metaphor. This can be seen clearly in how the containers of the inner environment of the

¹⁷² They argue that this occurs because these external representations, being part of the lived experience at the root of metaphor, feedback into the cognitive system of the individual. They also identify three different ways in which this convergence of individual and culture takes place through metaphor. First, representations elaborate upon metaphors and provide specific examples of them. Second, cultural representations like artifacts can strengthen metaphorical representations, acting as reminders for the various connections made by the metaphor. Third, representations can create new forms or ways of representing metaphors, as well as take older forms and re-represent them in ways more easily understood for new generations (Winter and Matlock 2019, 111).

¹⁷³ They illustrate this using a story of two people named Otto and Inga, in which the former has a severe memory disorder. Both of the characters want to go to the museum, which in order to get to they must remember the address where it is located. Inga can simply access the address via her brain's memory, while Otto must write down the address in his notebook, which when he needs to remember he can refer to. Clark and Chalmers claim that the only difference between the two is that Inga stores the information in her brain while Otto stores it in his notebook, but otherwise the cognitive process of accessing and acting on information are in principle the same. This implies that cognitive processes need not be limited to the neural activities behind the skull, but can utilize the environment to assist and enhance cognition. Following a Cartesian legacy, traditional cognitive science has often mistaken the problem-solving abilities of people, who are always embodied and socio-environmentally embedded, with the functions of the brain. Clark, arguing the relevance of extended mind in his characteristically eloquent prose describes the situation by saying "The human mind, if it is to be the physical organ of human reason, simply cannot be seen as bound and restricted by the biological skinbag. In fact, it has never been thus restricted and bound, at least not since the first meaningful words were uttered on some ancestral plain. But this ancient seepage has been gathering momentum with the advent of texts, PCs, coevolving software agents, and user-adaptive home and office devices. The mind is just less and less in the head" (Clark 2003, 4).

magician and outer environments of the ritual space reflect each other.¹⁷⁴ Their interpenetration can be seen in the magician's being simultaneously in both physical and mental spaces associated with an element. We can see this connection of mental and physical space clearly in Druid Magic, where while invoking the elements one brings forth awareness of "mind and thoughts" in the east for Air, "passions and desire" in the south for Fire, "feelings and emotion" in the west for Water, and "physical senses" in the north for Earth (Greer 2008, 113-114). While occupying the external space of a given quadrant, one also experiences a corresponding change in their internal mental space associated with the element connected to it. Over time this entrains the activation of a given internal state when one is present in the corresponding quadrant associated with it through a given element, creating the reflection of external physical and internal mental space. We can say that the aspects of the external environment also exist in the inner realm of thought, and vice versa, and are connected through metaphor. This means that there is both a ritual space within the inner environment of thought, as well as an environment of thought extended into the external environment of the tasks of ritual action. The outer environment is then endowed with the mental quality of thought, and the inner environment is endowed with the physical quality of space. The mind has extended into the world, just as the world has extended into the mind.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ This reflection of inner and outer space is in line with Simon's (2008) distinction between inner and outer environments. Inner environments refers to the composition of a given thing (the materials it is constructed of, its functional-organization, etc.), while the outer environment refers to the context in which this thing is placed (the physical and cultural surroundings, as well as other artifacts which share this context). For example, whether a clock's time is correct or not depends on the inner environment of a clock (its gears and mechanisms) being appropriate to its external environment (the time zone where the clock is placed). This framework of outer and inner environments can apply to designed artifacts as well as cognitive agents. In a cognizer, the inner refers to an environment of thought, while the external refers to a task environment where certain goals are to be met. Although Simon maintains a clear distinction between external and internal environment, given that the task of the outer environment of the ritual space is to explore the inner environment of thought, this distinction becomes much less clear for our present case.

¹⁷⁵ This enminding of objects has been explored by Whitehead (2020), who claims that religious objects may be better understood as subjects. Although the potential personhood of objects which Whitehead suggests will not be explored in detail here, the suggestion that 'inanimate' objects may have subjective qualities external to the subjectivity of the perceiver is useful to keep in mind given the topsy-turvy nature of the subject-object relationship which occurs in the ritual space.

3.3 Navigating Metaphor in and Through Space

3.3.1 *Space and How It Blends*

The ritual space is an example of what Fauconnier and Turner (2002) call a blended space,¹⁷⁶ with the key addition that the ritual space blends both a conceptual space as well as a physical space which reflects the conceptual space. We can understand the ritual space as a blend of the microcosm and macrocosm, which compresses the macrocosm into a container of physical space which is suitable for interaction with the embodied microcosm of the magician.¹⁷⁷ The theoretical aspect of the four elements is then blended with the concept of this containing physical space, leading to the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor. We can see this understanding of the ritual space as a building when Lipp refers to the necessity of consecrated material instantiations of the element by saying “Now we’re ready to build the ritual space, but first we need building materials” (Lipp 2003, 101). This abstract conceptual metaphor is then

¹⁷⁶ Conceptual blending, proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), describes how humans combine information from multiple domains to form a new conceptual space which utilizes some information from these domains, but not all. Some aspects of the two input domains will be common to one another, with others differing. The blended space is formed through a combination of the structural components which are shared between the inputs, and a selective projection of some of their differing aspects into it. Metaphors are a result of this conceptual blending process. One clear example of a blended space is a computer desktop. This blends the domains of our tangible experience of dealing with files physically by placing them into folders, and the nature of digital information which is stored through binary encoding. These two domains deal with information in vastly different ways, but they share the fact that they both sort and save information. Since the tangible experience of placing files in folders is more intuitively familiar to us, this is selectively projected into the blended space to make the navigation of digital infrastructure more familiar to our experience, and therefore easier to use. Fauconnier and Turner describe the main goal of conceptual blends as achieving human scale (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 312). This means taking something which may be harder to comprehend, and framing it in a way which is more familiar to our everyday existence. They state that “Human beings are evolved and culturally supported to deal with reality at human scale – that is, through direct action and perception inside familiar frames, typically involving few participants and direct intentionality. The familiar falls into natural and comfortable ranges. Certain ranges of temporal distance, spatial proximity, intentional relation, and direct cause-effect relation are human-friendly. Other things being equal, it is good for a blend to belong to these ranges” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 322). For more on the use of conceptual blending in the study of magic and ritual, see Sørensen (2000a, 2008).

¹⁷⁷ In other words, the ritual space makes the ungraspable graspable. As a blended space of microcosm and macrocosm which acts as a medium between them, we can refer to the ritual space as a mesocosm. This is reflected by Lipp’s claim that the ritual space is placed “between the worlds” (Lipp 2003, 56). What is shared between the input domains of microcosm and macrocosm are the balanced interaction of the four elements, as well as the container schema which holds these. What is not shared is the scale at which these take place, and what the container enables. The container of the microcosm (the body) does not enable us to move through it, but the container of the macrocosm (the universe) does afford movement through it. This ability for movement within a container is selectively projected into the blended space, making it too a container which one can move through, but on a smaller scale which is familiar to the embodied microcosm. At this blended scale, the movement-affording container of space resembles a building.

further blended with the concrete situation of ritual, leading to the blend of abstract and concrete space which is the ritual space.¹⁷⁸

Space is a fundamental aspect of our embodied condition.¹⁷⁹ Tversky (2001) illustrates how both internal and external representations reflect spatial thinking, using examples such as:

[...] charts of social networks, like family trees or organizations; depictions of religious ideas, like mandalas or Kabbalah; diagrams of scientific theories, like the structure of an atom or the expression of a gene, [which] are spatial whether in the mind or on paper.

(Tversky 2001, 202)¹⁸⁰

People create internal mental spaces using the imagination. These can be both highly abstract spaces, as in the case of the blended spaces of Fauconnier and Turner, or highly concrete, as in

¹⁷⁸ Fauconnier and Turner (2002) also propose four other subgoals of conceptual blends: (1) to compress what is diffuse, (2) obtain global insight, (3) strengthen vital relations, and (4) go from many to one (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 312). The ritual space compresses what is diffuse in the sense that it compresses the various qualities and situations pertaining to the elements into a single physical space and lived situation. It helps to obtain global insight in that it exhibits the balancing quality of the theory of the four elements, and affords insights about this global aspect of the theory. The ritual space aids in the strengthening of vital relations in that specific concepts and objects associated with the elements are placed together spatially with others related to the same element, and therefore are related to each other. Crucially, it helps the elements go from many to one in the sense that the elements are initially conceived as separate entities or parts which are unified through their balancing of each other in the space. This unification of the elements is done by the magician (representing a fifth element of Spirit), and so there is not only a unification of the elements in the container of the ritual space but also in the container of the magician as well. Also, since the microcosm of the magician reflects the macrocosm, the ritual space also unifies the space an individual occupies externally or physically (the space of the macrocosm) with the space of themself which they occupy internally or psychologically (the space of the microcosm).

¹⁷⁹ Navigating space is essential for survival; our life depends on knowing and finding places which serve our basic needs like food and shelter. Both from its importance and its being ever present in our experience, space forms a crucial aspect of our cognition, particularly relating to metaphor.

¹⁸⁰ She claims that our conception of space is derived from a combination of perception and action, and that we create mental spaces to both understand and enable perception and action. The first space we encounter is the body, and the experience of all subsequent spaces is accomplished through the body via perception and action (Tversky 2001, 202). Perception and action are so tightly entangled, that they can be thought of as constitutive of each other. This helps to further explain how the ritual space (the perceived and acted upon) and the body (the perceiver and actor) can be associated, as they both share a spatial conception as well as a metaphorical conception of being containers of the four elements.

the case of the mental spaces needed to navigate the physical environment.¹⁸¹ Tversky then claims that:

Like maps, visualizations of the abstract use elements and spatial relations among them, but they use them metaphorically to represent abstract elements and relations. Part of their success is that they rely on human facility in understanding spatial information and making spatial inferences. (Tversky 2001, 211)¹⁸²

The reason for the effectiveness of spatial thinking has to do with the embodied nature of our cognition.¹⁸³ Mental and physical space can therefore be blended. This use of physical space to conceptualize abstract concepts can be clearly seen in the spaces that people create to assist cognitive processes as “spaces in the world that serve internal spaces in the mind” (Tversky 2001, 208). Since these are the result of correlations which are natural to the embodied condition of our cognition, “external spaces both reflect and support human thought, concrete and abstract” (Tversky 2001, 213).

By orienting the four elements to the four cardinal directions, one extends the order of the abstract theory of the four elements into the order of concrete physical space. The balanced quality of the theory is illustrated by the symmetrical orientation of the elements into four equidistant positions. Also, the reflection point of this symmetry is the center of the ritual space, illustrating the balancing quality of the magician and Spirit which are also spatialized to the center. Doing this allows one to utilize the power of spatial cognition to aid in understanding and

¹⁸¹ In the case of mental spaces reflecting physical space, one can imagine the perspective of being embedded in the physical environment, and navigate using their experientially derived knowledge of moving through space. One is then able to imaginarily transform the mental space to reflect the changing perspective of their movement through the physical space, allowing physical navigation through it. This same knowledge of physical space and its potential transformations can also be used to navigate abstract concepts. One classic example of this is the memory palace, which has its origins in ancient Greece. In a memory palace, one imagines different rooms which they fill with knowledge about a given topic. When one needs to remember this knowledge, they imagine navigating to the room of the memory palace which is filled with the knowledge they require (Fassbender 2006, 457).

¹⁸² Thinking of abstract concepts in a spatial manner can be seen in phrases such as “getting close to someone,” “arriving at an insight,” “entering a new field,” and “wrapping one’s head around an idea.”

¹⁸³ We cannot get outside of our bodies’ and the world, but we can extend our conceptions of them through the imagination. Yet since our imagination is derived from our embodied experience in the world, it is constrained by both the body and the world. This is summarized clearly by Tversky, who says “The embodied and situated cognitive structures and biases of thought about space and about action limit and bias abstract thought as well. Thought is grounded in the world and in the body. Our bodies not only sense but also participate in thought; we use our bodies to locate, to refer, to measure, to arrange and rearrange, to transform. Imagination is not limited by the body and the world; it is enabled by the body and the world. The representations and processes used to understand the spatial world and act in it are those that allow invention, creativity, and discovery” (Tversky 2001, 213).

exploration of the four elements. The objects in the space which represent the four elements are also symmetrically aligned to this spatialization of the elements (Lipp 2003, 86-92; Greer 2008, 111-115; Kraig 2010, 90-92).¹⁸⁴ This means that not only does the ritual space and the objects within it function metaphorically, but so too does the organization of these objects and their alignment to the metaphorical properties of the space.

When the magician occupies the ritual space, they are within a space which reflects themselves because it is organized such that it maps onto the (perceived) organization of their own internal dynamics. The ritual space can then be seen as a scaling up of the self and extending it into external space.¹⁸⁵ This is what allows one to explore external physical space as a means of exploring their inner mental space. The ritual space is then a blend of the physical and mental, the abstract and concrete, the microcosm and macrocosm, and the self and itself.

3.3.2 Blending Imaginal and Physical Space

The connection of concrete physical and abstract mental space has been explored extensively by Franchetto (2020) in his dissection of the ritual spaces of medieval magicians. Here he introduces the concept of the Imagined Architectural Device (IAD), which are sacred spaces created through the imagination. Franchetto Builds upon Clucas' (2000) idea that the first tool for probing reality is the body, to which everything is referred. As a result, the IAD is conceptualized as an analogical or virtual copy of the body. This is in line with the previous examination of the ritual space and its connection to the body.¹⁸⁶ IADs are temporary architectural artifacts which create a portable, spatially unfixed¹⁸⁷ ritual space which helps to orient cognition and behavior. Franchetto defines IADs as “architectural operations that work at the interplay between mental projections and material culture, and that modify the perception of space” (Franchetto 2020, 1). This means that a mental space is projected onto the physical space

¹⁸⁴ This can be considered an example of Schilperoord et al.'s (2009) concept of Symmetrical Object Alignment. This refers to the symmetrical alignment of different kinds of objects as a means of creating a conceptual or metaphorical association between them, and is prevalent in advertising.

¹⁸⁵ The microcosmic (inner) self is in the macrocosmic (outer) self. Therefore the ritual space can be seen as a space of blended self, or an extension upwards of the microcosmic self which meets the scaled down macrocosmic self at the middle ground of the mesocosmic ritual space.

¹⁸⁶ Franchetto disagrees with Clucas in that he claims the body does not extend into the ritual space. However, he is examining a different context (that of medieval ritual magic) than the one we are examining (contemporary ritual magic). Therefore we can say that, at least in the context which we are exploring, the body~mind does extend into the ritual space. It would be interesting to see if Franchetto's position would be adjusted if Extended Mind Theory was incorporated into his framework.

¹⁸⁷ This allows them to be incorporated into other preexisting physical spaces.

through techniques of the imagination, as well as instantiated by the objects in and the orientation of the physical space. This implies that IADs can simultaneously be physically as well as imaginarily real. The ritual space of the magic circle and the visualizations incorporated into its creation are an example of an IAD. This can be seen most clearly in the physical and visualized drawing of a containing magic circle (Kraig 2010, 116; Greer 2008, 114; Lipp 2003, 101-103). We can also see this in Druid Magic, where one is asked to visualize yellow light around the incense while using it to invoke the Air in the east (Greer 2008, 114), or Ceremonial Magic, where one visualizes the tactile sensation of wind during the innovation of Air (Kraig 2010, 121). The imaginal projection of IADs onto physical space further adds to the topsy-turvy nature of the inwardness and outwardness of the ritual space, as the external space now contains things which exist physically (objects, directions, etc.) as well as mentally (colored light, perceptual sensations, entities, etc.). All of these are inextricably bound through the imagination in the ritual space; physical, mental, inner, and outer space are all connected to and contained within one another.

IADs also allow for a connection between the more abstract concept of a space with the more concrete concept of a place. Tuan (2001) claims that a space can become a place when one gets to know it and endows it with value. By giving place to space, the space becomes real by making it a “tangible construction” in which “one can dwell” (Tuan 2001, 6-12). The setting of a ritual is no usual place, but one set apart as non-ordinary.¹⁸⁸ This setting apart is reflected in the separation between the space internal to the container of the ritual space, and the space external to it.¹⁸⁹ Franchetto utilizes Bell’s (2009) claim that it is useful to examine ritual through the

¹⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that the ritual space is referred to as a “temple” (Kraig 2010, 88; Lipp 2003, 262) and that it is also used to set a space apart. According to Utriainen (2020), “The Greek word for ‘temple’, temenos [τέμενος], derives from temnō [τέμνω] (‘to cut’), to set apart from the usual and everyday course of affairs. Thus, anything that is placed or made to take place inside sacred space, however ordinary a thing or action it may be in another social context, by the very operation of being set apart, gains special attention and becomes something out of the ordinary” (Utriainen 2020, 199). The distinction created by this setting apart can have a variety of implications. The distinction could be between the sacred and profane, making the space inside of the magic circle sacred and therefore suitable for ritual activities (Lycourinos 2017, 79; Lipp 2003, 4; Kraig 2010, 334; Greer 2008, 177-179). It could also be between psychological states, with an altered state of consciousness present inside the circle, and made distinct from the everyday state of consciousness one partakes in outside of it (Lycourinos 2017, 106; Lipp 2003, 42-43; Kraig 2010, 88, 727; Greer 2008, 58). Another possible distinction is an ontological one, where the circle represents a separation from a disenchanted secular ontology without, and an enchanted ontology within which affords communion with the astral, godly, or spiritual realm (Lycourinos 2017, 110; Lipp 2003, 56; Kraig 2010, 521, 647; Greer 2008, 177-179). In any case, the magic circle makes a distinction between an outside space which is not suitable for ritual action, and a space inside where ritual activities can occur. For more on the setting apart of sacred space, see Taves (2013).

¹⁸⁹ A building is an example of a container which distinguishes between different spaces (outside and inside), leading to the usefulness of architecture as a means of creating this distinction.

process of ritualization, in which one acts in a way which is structured such that it distinguishes and privileges what is being done. This results in ritualized bodies, defined as “a body invested with a sense of ritual” which is the result of “the interaction of the body with a structured and structuring environment” (Bell 2009, 98). This description reflects our previous description of the ritual space as structured according to the theory of the four elements, which itself is a theory for structuring one's own experience. Franchetto then defines ritual as:

[...] a device in the sense that it is a system of elements (e.g., gestures, prayers, tools, locations) that orient and control the behaviors and beliefs of those who engage with it, orienting the ways of apprehending the world and making sense of reality, making individuals ritual subjects. (Franchetto 2020, 5)

This “making sense” which ritual provides has a double meaning. It can help one make sense of the world in the sense that it helps one to understand and navigate the world. Yet ritual also helps to make sense of the concepts which the ritual utilizes in the sense that it provides these concepts with sensible forms, such as material objects or visualizations. According to Meyer (2012), sensational forms are the material medium which produces a sense of presence.¹⁹⁰ By incorporating objects associated with the four elements into the ritual space, a sense of the elements being present in the ritual space (in both an abstract and concrete form) is also created. Combined with the sense of place created by the concrete instantiation of the theory of the four elements in the architecture, we now have both a sense of place and a sense of presence within this place, both of which are metaphorically connected to the four elements and one another.

This doubles down on the sense of reality which the ritual space creates, in that the elements have their presence in a place where the magician is also present.¹⁹¹ The importance of this presence is clearly seen in Druid Magic, where before invoking the elements in the quarters the magician proclaims:

¹⁹⁰ This sense of presence increases the feeling that what one is experiencing is real, as a large contributing factor in our conceiving of something as real comes from it being present to us (in our experience).

¹⁹¹ As things tend to be perceived as present if their presence is shared with the presence of the perceiver within a given place.

Let the powers be present as I am about to open a grove of Druids in this place. The first duty of a Druid in the Sacred Grove is to proclaim peace to the four quarters of the world, for without peace my work cannot proceed. (Greer 2008, 113)

The presence of the elements is also connected to the sense of place through incorporation of their instantiations (in the form of objects) in a way which is oriented to the design of the IAD (in the form of quadrants). The orientation of the four quadrants of the IAD to the cardinal directions helps to further the connection between imaginal and physical space.¹⁹² By involving the imagination in the creation of the ritual space, one can incorporate the imaginal perceptual qualities of the elements which they learned to visualize in the elemental exercises. These imaginal perceptions, both concrete and abstract, can then be spatialized to the quadrants of the ritual space, imbuing the space with further aspects associated with the elements. This also gives the perceptions connected to the elements a sense of orientation in space as well as a specific place where they are present.¹⁹³

The loop of concrete and abstract experience can be seen clearly in this incorporation of imagined visualizations that are projected onto physical space. The perceptions which underlie these visualizations originated in the concrete physical world, and were incorporated into one's memory through an experience of interaction, such as the early elemental exercises where one goes into nature. These then formed the basis for the more abstract form of experience that is perceiving the qualities of the elements through practices of visualization using the imagination. These abstracted perceptions are then reconnected to the concrete by orienting them toward the ritual space and imaginarily projecting them back into physical space by visualizing the qualities of the elements in each of the quadrants. In doing this, we have completed our loop from concrete to abstract back to concrete. One can then take this concrete physical space, complete with the various qualities projected onto it, and project it back into the realm of abstract mental space through practices of visualization. For example, one could use the physical ritual space in the same way one uses the environmental maps which allow navigation of physical space, as

¹⁹² Franchetto found that the orientation of the ritual space to the cardinal directions was also important to the magicians he studies because "not only are the diagrams a miniaturization of the cosmos, but they should also be aligned with the cosmological axes" (Franchetto 2020, 8).

¹⁹³ In the LBRP both optical and tactile visualizations are used during the invocations of the angels (Kraig 2010, 120-122). In the Sphere of Protection ritual, natural landscapes as well as colored light are visualized using various sensory modalities, as well as abstract concepts associated with the elements (Greer 2008, 114).

described by Tversky. In this case though one would be using this environmental map of physical space to navigate abstract concepts. One could use visualization to imaginarily re-enter the ritual space, which has been endowed with abstract meaning, and navigate the abstract concepts using the skills of physical navigation. This can be seen in Kraig's "astral" version of the LBRP, which creates the ritual space exclusively through visualization (Kraig 2010, 798-799).¹⁹⁴ We can see from this second circumambulation that the loop of concrete and abstract can be wrapped back into itself over and over. The IAD therefore helps to explain how one can not only project mental space onto physical space, but also physical space onto mental space, and therefore connect the concrete and abstract in a cyclical fashion.

3.4 Crafting Change Through Architectural Action

3.4.1 *Building the Ritual World Through Metaphorical Acts*

The creation of the magic circle and demarcation of the quadrants and connection of them to the elements is accomplished with specific actions. The magic circle is drawn both physically and imaginarily through the actions of the body. In regards to the demarcation of the quadrants, one important aspect of the actions which accomplish this is the use of speech. Frankfurter (2019) explores the role of speech in the practices of magic by identifying them as speech acts. The speech act was proposed by Austin (1962) as a category of performative utterance which under the right conditions can cause change in the world.¹⁹⁵ Frankfurter then employs Wheelock's (1982) category of the ceremonial speech act. Ceremonial speech acts are not used to convey information, but instead are acts which "create and allow the participation in a known and repeatable situation" and "engender a particular state of affairs and at the same time express recognition of its reality" (Wheelock 1982, 58-59).¹⁹⁶ We can consider all of the speech acts

¹⁹⁴ We can think of this as a kind of memory palace which contains not only propositional, but also procedural, perspectival, and participatory knowledge.

¹⁹⁵ Common examples of speech acts include saying "I do" in a marriage ceremony, or a priest proclaiming a cup of wine as "the blood of Christ" in the Catholic communion rite. Austin offers three classifications of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary (Austin 1962, 94-107). Locutionary speech acts refer to our common use of language to form meaningful expressions such as saying "it's sunny outside." Illocutionary speech acts are defined as a speech act which accomplishes in the world what it declares verbally. Examples of this include commands such as "turn on the light" which cause a change in the world. While illocutionary speech acts are directed primarily at objects, perlocutionary speech acts serve a similar function, but are directed at agents and are reliant on their subjective interpretation. Examples include statements like "you did a great job" which may cause change in a person's confidence.

¹⁹⁶ Wheelock (1982) explores the redefining of everyday objects as ritual objects in the Vedas as a clear example of ceremonial speech acts. The effectiveness of these situating ceremonial speech acts derives from the performative situation in which it takes place. As Frankfurter puts it "the mythological redefining of things in the ritual space (like

involved in the creation of the ritual space to be of the ceremonial type, given that the creation of the ritual space is a ceremonial act of redefining space itself as having ritualistic meaning, and thus creating a situation where further ritual action can take place.¹⁹⁷

The movement of the tongue and jaw in the act of speaking is only one aspect of how the body's action is engaged in the creation of the ritual space. Farnell (1996) explores how gesture and other movements of the body are involved in metaphorical processing. She considers human movements to be “‘action signs,’ that is, as signifying acts done with movement—analogous to speech acts as signifying acts done with sound” (Farnell 1996, 322). She claims that bodily movement is a medium which can be used in semiotic processing, and thus is constructed by conceptual, imaginative, and metaphorical processes.¹⁹⁸ This leads to the concept of the metaphorical gesture, which is a metaphor that is expressed through the medium of the body. She claims that when body movements are viewed as action signs, these can develop into semiotic practices such as dance or ritual. We can think of these as an example of the metaphorical performances described by Gibbs (2019). A clear example of this is the literal drawing of the magic circle. In all three of the rituals of creation of space we are examining, one literally walks around the circle in the act of drawing its boundaries, thereby drawing the circle with their own body. This metaphorical gesture of circumambulation creates the containing structure of the ritual space, and is the act that distinguishes it from the non-ritualized space of the outside world. This act is both a physical as well as imaginal action, as a circle of light is also visualized in this act of creating the magic circle (Lipp 2003, 109-115; Greer 208, 88; Kraig 2010, 115-117).

Another clear use of metaphorical gesture is in the drawing of the pentagrams and elemental symbols, which can be considered visual metonymies.¹⁹⁹ What is particularly interesting about these visual metonymies is that the image itself is not the only thing which

hammers or wafers) involves the total ritual situation [...]” (Frankfurter 2019, 610). We can see this clearly in the consecration of the elements in the Wiccan example, where everyday objects like Water, salt, or candles are ritualistically redefined using speech acts as sacred ceremonial objects (Lipp 2003, 77-92).

¹⁹⁷ There are also other speech acts within the creation of the ritual space that can be considered illocutionary. Statements such as “I proclaim peace in the east” (Greer 2008, 113) in the Grove of the Druid ritual declare a state of affairs necessary for the continuation of the ritual. Invocatory statements such as the calling upon the elements, elementals, or guardians in the creation of the Wiccan ritual space bring forth certain entities or energies associated with the elements by way of speech. Statements like “On my right hand, Michael” (Kraig 2010, 125) in the LBRP can be considered both declaring and invoking, in that the statement is made to invoke the archangel but is phrased in a declarative manner as if it is already the case that the archangel is “on the right hand” of the magician.

¹⁹⁸ In the case we are examining, they are not only constructed by these processes, but also play an active role in the construction of conceptual, imaginative, and metaphorical processes.

¹⁹⁹ A metonymy is a concept that stands in for another concept, like describing a boss as the “head” of a company, or the use of a crescent and star as a symbol for Islam.

holds metonymic value, but so too is the gesture of drawing them. By changing the way one draws these symbols, they also change their meaning (see Appendix 5 and 6). Given that both the symbol itself and the gesture of drawing it hold metaphorical significance, we can consider these not only as visual but also gestural metonymies. Farnell also claims that abstract concepts and relationships are often expressed in gestural forms, and these metaphorical gestures create images of these abstractions (Farnell 1996, 326).²⁰⁰ When the magician engages in the gesture of drawing a pentagram or elemental symbol they create an image of it. This image is further embellished and brought into conscious awareness by the fact that one visualizes lines being created as they draw the symbol. Therefore, the image of the pentagram and elemental symbols is created both tangibly through bodily movements, as well as imaginarily through the use of visualizations which correspond to these movements.

Another action which one engages in the creation of the ritual space is visualization. When invoking the angels associated with the elements in the LBRP or invoking the elements in the Sphere of Protection, one actively visualizes the various sensory qualities associated with the elements (Kraig 2010, 120-122; Greer 2008, 114). This connects perception (of the qualities of the elements) to action (of invoking the elements).²⁰¹ By engaging this bringing forth of perception during an act of invocation, which is a bringing forth of the elements, the magician connects two types of actions which bring things forth. The practices of visualization bring forth the perceptual qualities of the elements, while the invocatory actions bring forth the element itself (usually through an entity associated with it). Moreover, the act of invocation brings something forth so it can be perceived,²⁰² and the visualization brings forth the perceptions which would arise from the associated entity or element which is invoked. Therefore, by utilizing visualization in the act of invocation, one brings forth what they invoke into presence by bringing forth the sensations which would be perceived if the entity/element being invoked was already present. Perception and action are inseparable, and the invocatory acts in the creation of the ritual space reflect this.

²⁰⁰ We can see the abstract relationship of the elements expressed in the image of the pentagram in its geometric connection of the elements to one another, with Spirit being the higher principle (both ontologically and geometrically) which keeps these in balance.

²⁰¹ It should be remembered that engaging in visualization is an *act* of bringing forth the qualities of the elements into perception using the imagination. Visualization then inherently combines perception and action.

²⁰² Such as when I invoke someone into the room I am sitting in so that I can perceive and therefore speak to them.

3.4.2 *Self Building the Self-Building*

The use of IADs as a miniaturization of a theory is a clear example of the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor, which is so heavily used by Lakoff and Johnson. The ritual space's reflection of the elemental container of the body allows it to be combined with the PEOPLE/BODIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor.²⁰³ Yet 'building' is not only a noun but also a verb; it implies a process of construction. The building itself of the IAD is not only a metaphorical instantiation of the theory of the four elements in physical space, but so too is the process of building this building.²⁰⁴ This means that in drawing the circle and demarcating the quadrants the magician is engaged in a metaphorical performance in which they are the builder of this building which is the ritual space. This becomes especially interesting when it is kept in mind that the structure of the ritual space which the magician is building is an extended representation of themselves. This means that in the act of creating the ritual space, the builder is building a structure that reflects themselves, so the building is also the builder. In other words, since the building represents the same self which builds it, it can be said that in the creation of the ritual space, the self is building itself.

The creation of the ritual space, as well as the other ritualistic acts which take place within it can be seen as reflections and enactments of a magical worldview.²⁰⁵ This is explored by Lycourinos in his rare examination of the embodied experience of contemporary magic practitioners *Ritual Embodiment in Modern Western Magic: Becoming the Magician* (2017). Here he defines the worldview of ritual magic as a participatory worldview in which one participates by "embodiment the magician" (Lycourinos 2017, 3). He claims that due to this participatory quality, magic cannot be studied by examining how it is understood and reacted to alone, but the focus of research must "shift to how it is enacted to become a meaningful 'lived

²⁰³ Seen in phrases such as "The eyes are the window to the soul," "He has a muscular build," and "There's not much going on upstairs."

²⁰⁴ Franchetto describes the act of drawing the lines which distinguish the ritual space and illustrate a miniaturized plan of its underlying theory using Malafouris' (2013) idea of an enactive signification. This is defined as "a process of embodied 'conceptual integration' responsible for the co-substantial symbiosis and simultaneous emergence of the signifier and the signified that brings forth the material sign" (Malafouris 2013, 99). This means that architectural objects are not ideas in the mind that get expressed in the world, but rather they emerge from the action of drawing. Put another way, the magician "while drawing a line, is actually erecting a wall" (Franchetto 2020, 6).

²⁰⁵ Although this worldview can imply many things, for our present purposes we can consider it a worldview which interprets experience through the lens of the metaphors of the four elements, and understands these as dynamically interrelated and (ideally) balanced.

phenomenon' for practitioners" (Lycourinos 2017, 2).²⁰⁶ Lycourinos proposes that this is accomplished through practices of ritual performance where one constructs a ritual body through which they can experience a participatory worldview that can only be perceived by an embodied becoming of the magician. This means that ritual magic is fundamentally a ritually acquired worldview that necessitates the knowledge and skill of the ritual specialist that is the magician. It does this through a combination of "the canonical, that is, the primary sources, with the self-referential, that is, the subjective ritual self, to cause certain effects 'in-the-world' as experienced by the magician" (Lycourinos 2017, 197). Since this worldview can only be participated in by being (embodied-in-the-world as) the magician, the practices of acquiring it must be firmly grounded in the experience of our embodied-being-in-the-world, ie. through embodiment of this worldview in ritual action. This is why all three of our authors place so much emphasis on a consistent practice of ritual, as it is only through experience of it that it can be understood (Greer 2008, 15-29; Kraig 2010, 31, 129, 233; Lipp 2003, 42, 124, 141). The tangibility and concreteness of ritual is fundamental for making it a participatory act, as it grounds the ritual in the in-the-world experience at the root of participation,²⁰⁷ while also connecting it to the highly abstract concepts which form a worldview. This changes the practitioner, for as Lycourinos says "the ability of the magician to participate in the worldview of Western ritual magic must be understood through the practical act of the reimagination and reinvention of the self" (Lycourinos 2017, 200). In adopting this new worldview, perception is transmuted and a new self is built which is the magician.

We can now begin to see why the idea of the self building a self-building discussed above is so important.²⁰⁸ By building both a ritualized body and a ritualized environment, the magician

²⁰⁶ This reflects an approach to study in line with Johnson's (2015) statement that understanding is less "a form of knowing or thinking than it is a matter of experiencing and acting" (Johnson 2015, 3).

²⁰⁷ As well as the formation of metaphors.

²⁰⁸ This concept is also central to Freemasonry. Freemasonry is an esoteric secretive society in which the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor is foundational. Freemasonry utilizes symbols, architecture, and rituals based on medieval craft guilds who constructed sacred buildings such as cathedrals. These are used as a means of transferring knowledge progressively through a system of grades (called degrees) in order to enhance an individual's moral autonomy (Önnerfors 2017, 32). This knowledge is "mainly manifested through the live performance of ritual and a specific visual culture whereby ideas are expressed through symbols, emblems, and interior design" (Önnerfors 2017, 54). The craft of building is conceived of as exemplifying divine power, as well as a metaphor for civilization and active service toward it (Önnerfors 2017, 69-70). Both the divine (which is referred to as the "Great Architect of the Universe") and the individual (once they reach the third degree of "Master" mason) are considered architects (Önnerfors 2017, 69, 90). The ritual space of Freemasonry is also symbolically and physically oriented to the cardinal directions, and filled with the ritualized tools of a Mason's craft (Hanegraaff and Dachez 2005, 386). The obvious similarity between Freemasonry and the practices we are exploring can be explained in part by the Masonic membership of the founders of the Golden Dawn (Regardie and Greer 2016, 23-49), and therefore its

creates both aspects necessary for the creation of a worldview. The container of the four elements that is the ritual space is an environment, and being such composes the ‘world’ aspect of an ‘embodied-being-in-the-world.’ The container of the four elements that is the magician is a body-subject, and being such composes the ‘embodied-being’ (‘being’ as a noun) aspect of an ‘embodied-being-in-the-world.’ The magician’s placement within the ritual space composes a presence which is the ‘being-in’ (‘being’ as a verb) aspect of an ‘embodied-being-in-the-world.’ In the act of creating the ritual space and body and then dwelling within these, the magician is engaged in a metaphorical performance of building all the necessary components which make up a worldview. By framing this as an action one participates in, the magician participates not only in this magical worldview, but is the active initiator of the participation itself, as well as the potential for it. We can consider all of this as a reimagining of the self and its embodied-being-in-the-world through an active construction of the necessary aspects which constitute a self’s embodied-being-in-the-world (body, world, and presence), thus enabling the construction of a new worldview which results from these. Since the four elements can be used to describe both the body-subject and the world, they can be used as a system of mediation for perception and action of the body-subject in the world.²⁰⁹ It makes no difference that we are considering the four elements as metaphors, as worldviews and metaphors are both something we live by. Since a worldview is the result of conceptualization, and conceptualization is the result of a worldview, these will both be structured by conceptual metaphors. In the act of participating in the creation of this worldview, we can say that the self participates in the redefining of its own conception of itself, the world, and the engagement of self and world. This is the “change in conformity with Will” (Crowley 1994, xii) which the magician initiates in and with their experience through the elements. This is the “experience of transmutation” (Faivre

influence on the ritual structure of the order (Gilbert 2016, 242). Its explanation can also be aided by considering the effectiveness of communicating understanding through metaphorical performance of the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor which involve ritualized actions related to the building of architecture. By ritualistically building up an individual so they can help better build the world, the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS and PEOPLE ARE BUILDINGS metaphors are combined in a similar way to the practices we are exploring. This points toward the potential ability of the frameworks used in this work to examine other ritual spaces and actions, such as those of Freemasonry.

²⁰⁹ Another way to describe this system of mediation between body-subject and the world is a worldview. We can say that since the four elements are shared by both the viewer (body-subject) and the world, and are used to mediate interaction between these, they are apt for making up a worldview.

1994, 13) that results in the *Rebis*²¹⁰ of the body and world which is the magician in the mesocosm. By building a new magical body and world through ritual, the self builds a new conception of itself, or as we said previously, the self is building itself.

3.5 Rapid Review

We began this work by examining how magic is conceptualized and found that it is often rejected and considered in opposition to established conventions, such as religion or science. We then saw how this conceptualization can be reified by scholarship, and identified the need of incorporating an inspection of cognition in the study of esotericism. Next, we turned to the ritual innovations of the Golden Dawn, and traced the histories of Ceremonial Magic, Wicca, and Druid Magic. This led us to the present day, where we met three contemporary authors representing these currents and their introductory guide books on becoming magicians. We then encountered Lakoff and Johnson and were introduced to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which illuminated the often overlooked ways in which metaphor is foundational to our conceptualization, cognition, and experience. Then, we explored the four elements as conceptual metaphors and examined how they connect the abstract to the concrete.

This led us inevitably to the body. We dug down to the element's embodied roots and investigated the practices of the elemental exercises, which utilize their foundation in the body to understand the elements through experience. Additionally, we examined how they are connected to abstract mental states and how they are abstracted into visualized perceptions. This required an exploration of the feedback loops which form understanding, and how magic utilizes tricks of language and the logic of correspondence to connect abstract and concrete concepts. After this, we expanded our exploration to include the positionality of the body and the situations which result from this. We examined how these situations are simulated imaginarily when using metaphor, and found that practices of visualization wrap this process back into itself.

We then ventured into the world and explored the practice of creating a ritual space and how mind can extend into the world. We investigated how actions, objects, and performances can all be metaphorical and how these are engaged as a form of space creation. The IAD was identified as a useful framework for inspecting the connection of physical and mental space

²¹⁰ ‘Rebis’ is a concept originating in alchemy which describes “the compound or conjunction of the two primary ingredients [...] of the Philosophers’ Stone” (Forshaw 2013, 382). Its use here is to denote the unification of polarities.

through the imagination. We observed how this facilitated spatial connection between concrete tangible and abstract mental space, and how the concrete, abstract, physical, and mental can interpenetrate in a fractal-like manner. Using this framework, we found that in creating the ritual space, the magician creates an environment which reflects themself, and in doing this builds a new magical worldview. This is possible because the microcosm of the embodied magician and the macrocosm of the wider universe are conceived of as containers of the four elements, which can thus be blended into the mesocosm of the ritual space. Thus the body and world are blended to participate in the magical worldview.

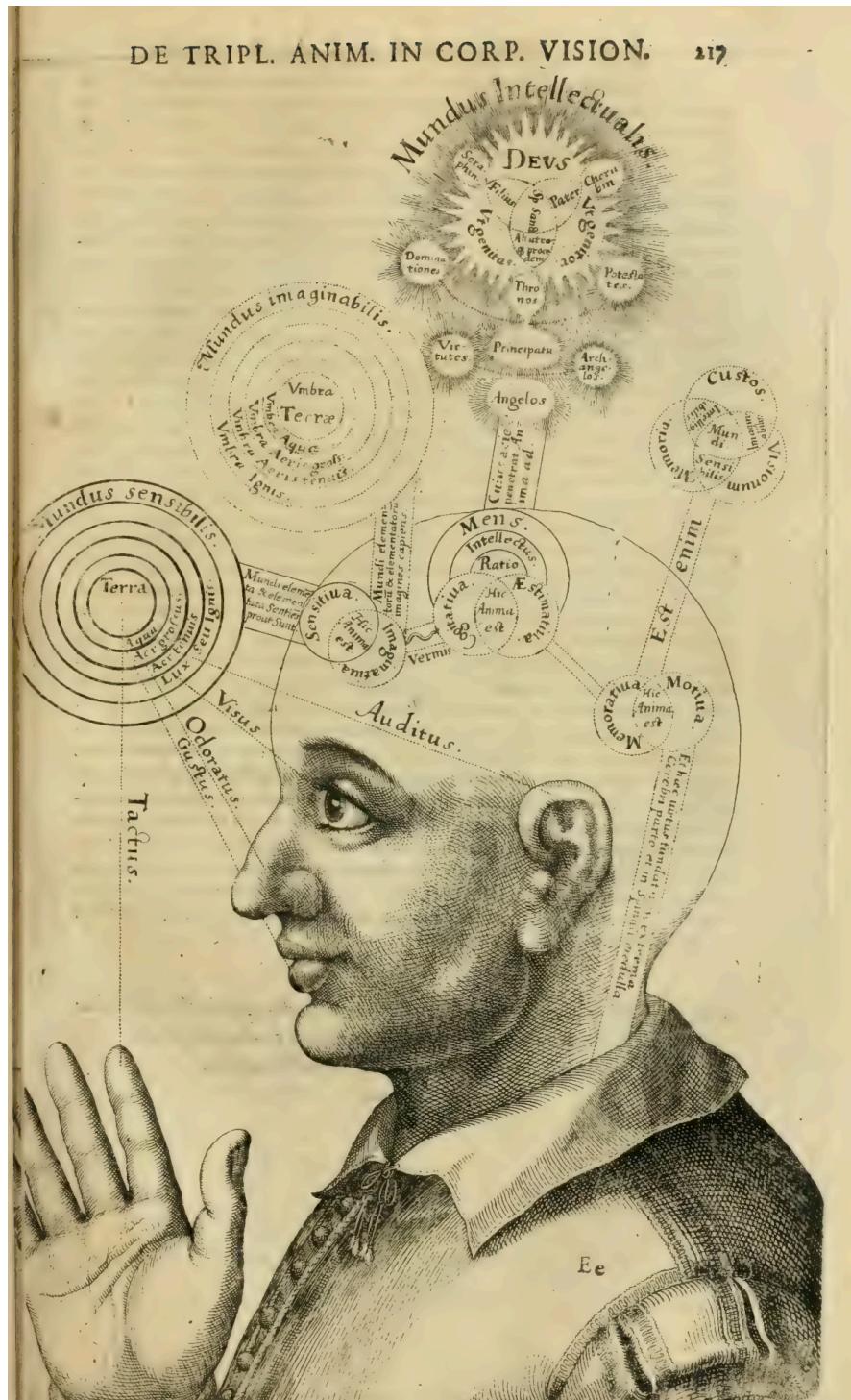
Throughout this entire journey, there has been a single unifying theme: that all of this can only be accomplished by way of experience.

Return to Tonic: Back to the Basics

We end where we began, with experience. We experience the world within our experience of the body, and through their relation we imagine ourselves into being...and in an ouroboric fashion, our experience wraps back into itself. We have observed the ways in which our experience changes our conception, as much as our conception changes our experience, and how a foundational aspect of this conception-experience is metaphor. It then seems fitting to conclude with a metaphor to conceptualize experience in contemporary ritual magic. Experience is stable as Earth, yet often ungraspable as Air, and is both spark and fuel of the Fire of the contemporary practice of magic and is the head-Water from which its various currents flow. We observed this in our assessment of the worldview of magic as a participatory one, and the importance of experience in the practices of acquiring it. We found support for the significance of experience in the ideas of both etic scholars and emic practitioners. By framing understanding as a purely propositional endeavor of “knowing and thinking” instead of including a participatory “experiencing and acting” (Johnson 2015, 3) one can easily overlook the consideration of experience in scholarship. This does a disservice to the understanding of the contemporary lived practices of ritual magicians, as we have seen that experience is at the core of their considerations. The practices of contemporary ritual magic begins and ends with experience, and thus the study of it, in whatever form that may take, must as well.

Appendix 1

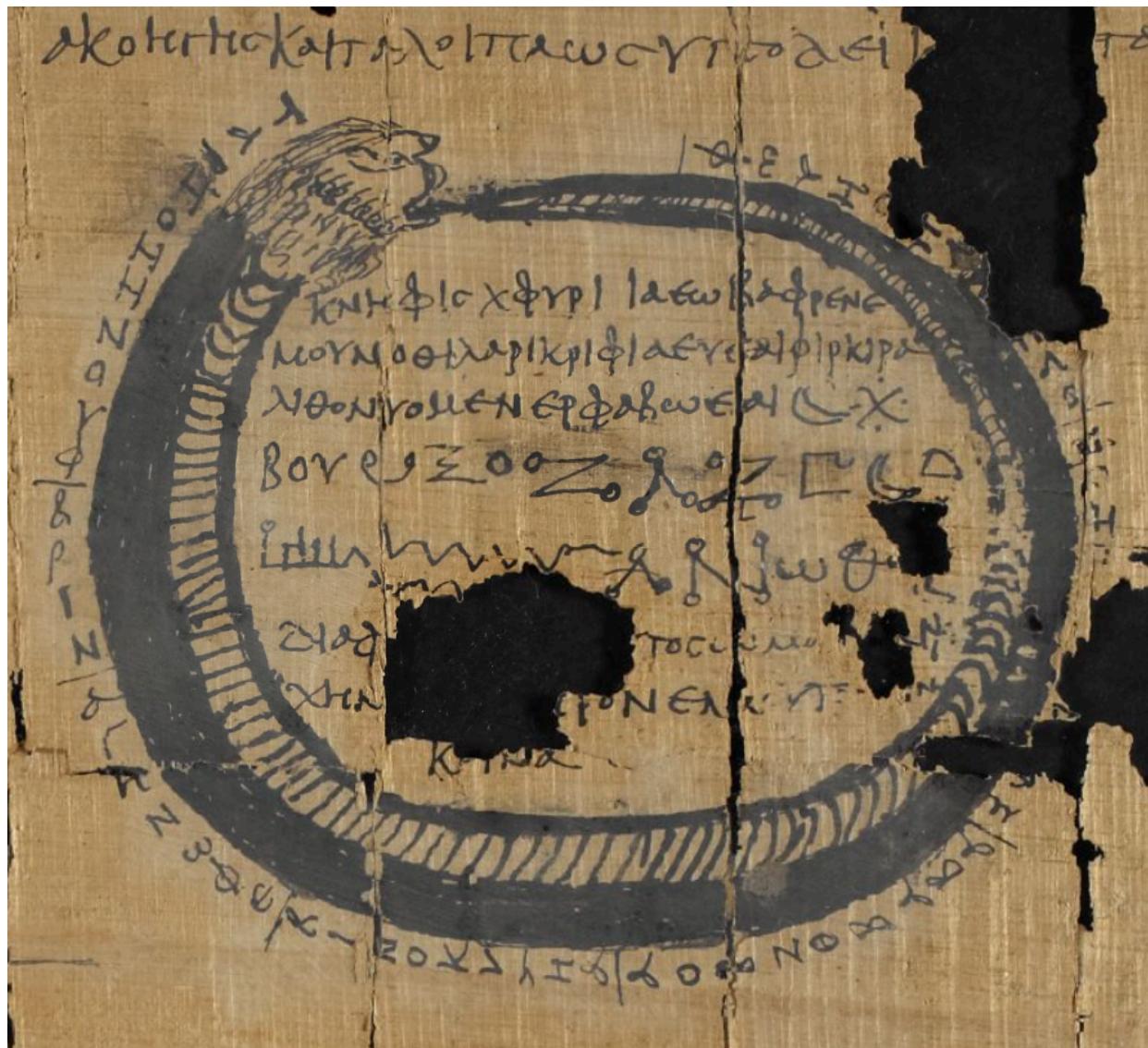
Robert Fludd's Diagram of the Human Mind



In Utriusque Cosmi Maioris Scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica Atque Technica Historia: Duo Volumna Secundum Cosmi Differentiam Diuisa at the Internet Archive (Fludd 1617, 217)

Appendix 2

Various Depictions of the Ouroboros



Ouroboros as a Boundary Around a Spell

In *The Greek Magical Papyri* (c. 200 CE) from Egypt, 3rd century: Papyrus 121(2)r at the
British Library



Prehistoric Amulet 38463

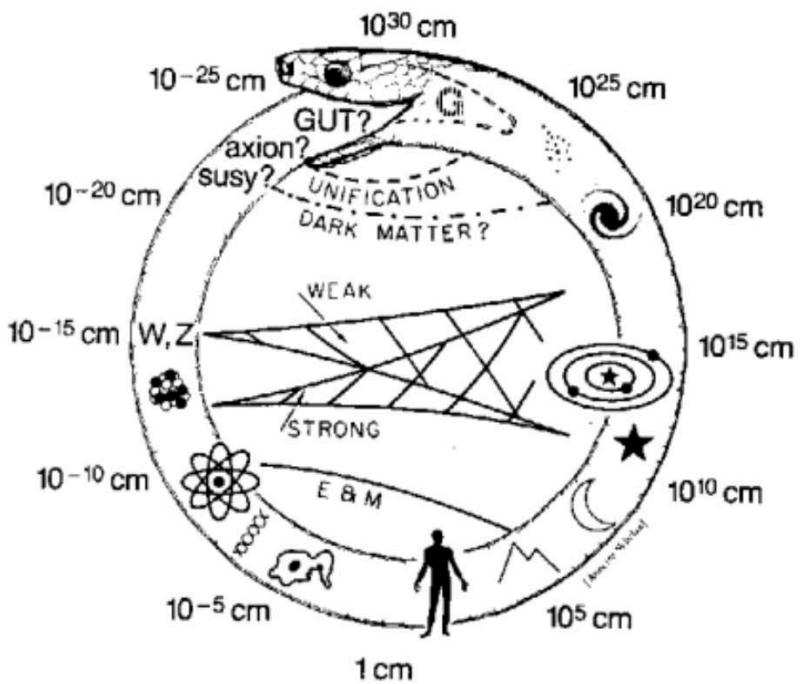
In the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology's Collection at University College London



Ouroboros with "the One is the All (Ἐγώ τὸ πᾶν)" Inscribed Within

In *Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra* (c. 200-300 CE) from Codices Graeci Manuscripti Marciana gr. Z.

299 (c. 1000 CE) at Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana



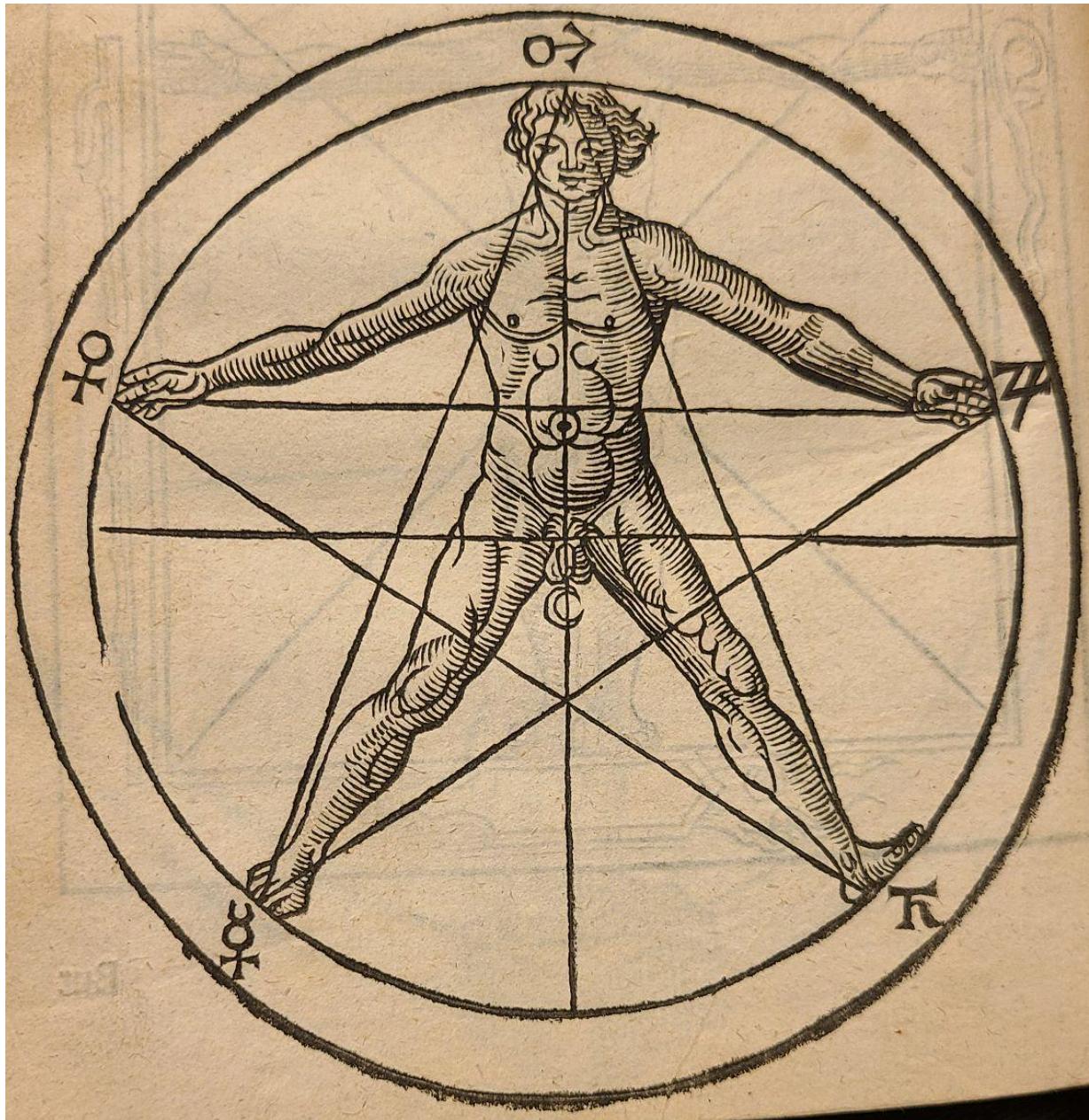
Two contemporary depictions of the Ouroboros

Originally juxtaposed in Pashaeva and Pashaev's *Ancient Myth and Modern Science* (2019, 61).

Original images from Ninth Wave Designs' *Alchemy Notebook: Tetractys* (2022) (left) and Primack's *Cosmology and Culture* (2002) which depicts Nobel Prize winning physicist Sheldon Glashow's (1932- CE) concept of the Cosmic Ouroboros (right).

Appendix 3

Cornelius Agrippa's Pentagram Superimposed on the Human Body



In *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* from the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica collection at the Allard Pierson Museum, University of Amsterdam (Agrippa 1651, 266)

Appendix 4

Lipp's Elemental Balance Table

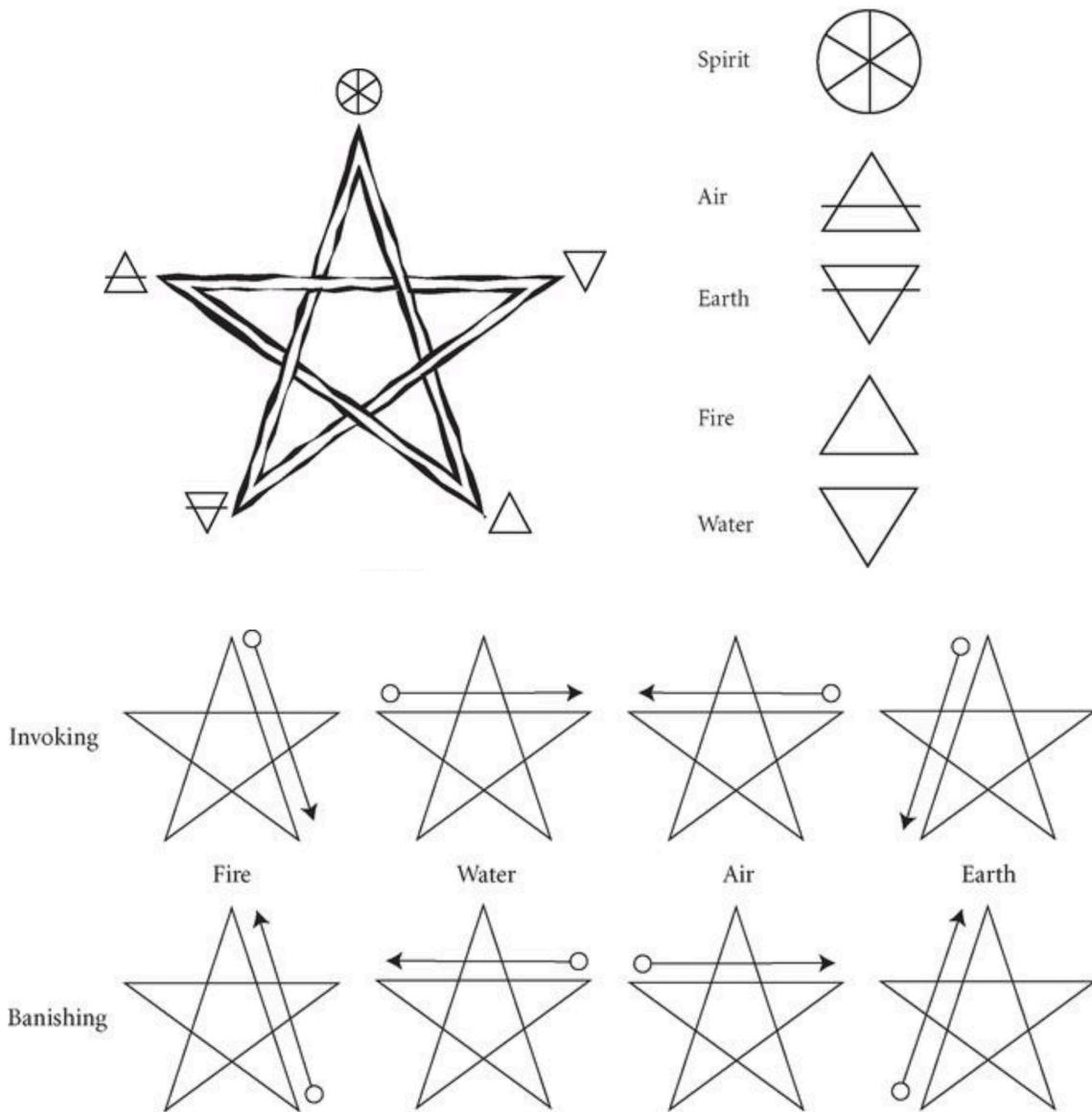
Balance Chart

NEGATIVE TRAIT	ELEMENT OF THE TRAIT	COULD BE BALANCED BY...
Addiction ²³	Water	Fire
Anger	Fire	Water or Air
Arrogance	Fire	Water
Attention deficit	Air	Earth or Fire
Boredom/In a rut	Earth	Fire
Depression	Water	Fire
Difficulty making decisions	Air	Fire or Earth
NEGATIVE TRAIT	ELEMENT OF THE TRAIT	COULD BE BALANCED BY...
Gossip	Air	Water
Impracticality	Air	Earth
Impulse control problems	Fire	Earth
Inability to finish things	Air	Fire or Earth
Inconsistent	Water	Earth
Laziness	Earth	Fire
Low self-esteem; self-hatred	Water	Fire or Earth
Moodiness	Water	Air or Earth
Obesity	Earth	Fire
Obsessiveness	Fire	Air
Procrastination	Air	Fire or Earth
Stubbornness	Earth	Air or Water
Unable to leave a bad situation	Earth	Fire or Air

In *The Way of Four* (Lipp 2023b, 93-94)

Appendix 5

Elemental Associations and Drawing Procedures for Invoking and Banishing Pentagrams



In *Modern Magick: Twelve Lessons in the High Magickal Arts* (Kraig 2010, 392-394)

Appendix 6

Table of Associations and Symbols of the Elements

Element	Air	Fire	Water	Earth	Spirit
Direction	East	South	West	North	Center
Color	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green	White
Time of Day	Dawn	Noon	Dusk	Midnight	Now
Animal	Hawk	Stag	Salmon	Bear	Human
Symbol					

In *The Druid Magic Handbook: Ritual Magic Rooted in the Living Earth* (Greer 2008, 48)

Appendix 7

Conceptual Metaphors of the Elemental Exercises

One of the foundational conceptual metaphors which connects the abstract mental properties associated with the elements with the concrete tangibility of the body is the MIND IS BODY metaphor (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2010).²¹¹ Given ritual magic's tendency to reverse the directionality of a metaphor, we can say that the abstract is also reconnected to the concrete using the BODY IS MIND metaphor.²¹² This metaphor allows for abstract mental states to be conceptualized in terms of the more familiar concrete concepts related to the body. Both the body and mind are seen as containers (Lakoff and Johnson 2011, 51) which allows for them to be connected through metaphor.²¹³ Being a container, the body~mind can hold substances. Since both physical and psychological properties are associated with the substances of the elements, when these substances enter the container of the body~mind, the associated tangible and psychological properties are also felt. This explains why while one is visualizing an element (and its tangible properties) entering the body, they also engage the associated psychological states. If the body is mind, and the elements have mental qualities, then the element entering the body would substantiate a change in mental state corresponding to the element.

We must begin with the body. The body is our primary example of a container, and its containment is of essential importance to us as embodied beings. The body is often conceptualized as the container of the self (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 30; Johnson 2000, 53). Given that the elements have both concrete and abstract properties, the abstract properties can be used to describe selves, and the concrete properties can be used to describe tangible qualities selves can perceive through the body. The connection of the abstract ideas of the elements and their perceivable concrete properties are connected through the IDEAS ARE PERCEPTIONS metaphor.²¹⁴ This allows the abstract ideas of the elements to be associated with a perceivable concrete quality, which allows one to connect the abstract sense of the ideas with concrete

²¹¹ Seen in phrases such as “Can you grasp that idea?” “Do you see my point?” “Have you heard of that theory?” “The book led him to a better understanding of the topic,” “Mental exercises will keep your memory strong,” and “Food for thought.”

²¹² Seen in phrases such as “I have a gut feeling” and “My heart says this is wrong.”

²¹³ I will be referring to this blended space of the containers of body and mind as the body~mind.

²¹⁴ Seen in phrases such as “I see your point,” “She examined it closely,” “Something felt wrong about the situation,” and “Her theory made sense.”

somatic sense perception. The abstract ideas of the elements have various properties, and these are connected to the sensible tangible properties of the elements using the PROPERTIES ARE PHYSICAL PROPERTIES metaphor.²¹⁵ Both these abstract and concrete properties are conceptualized as contents of the self through the PROPERTIES ARE CONTENTS metaphor.²¹⁶ In the elemental exercises, the contents are the elements themselves, and the properties are the perceivable tangible and psychological properties of the elements. This also utilizes the metaphor BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS²¹⁷ as evidenced by the description of feelings entering and exiting the body~mind. Also, the EMOTIONS ARE ENTITIES WITHIN A PERSON metaphor²¹⁸ is used in that the substances of the elements are a kind of entity which is associated with emotions, and this entity becomes internal to the body. By visualizing the elements making contact with and entering the body~mind, the abstract psychological qualities and the concrete physical qualities are connected through the EFFECT ON EMOTIONAL SELF IS CONTACT WITH PHYSICAL SELF metaphor.²¹⁹ By doing this, the less tangible abstract psychological qualities become more tangible as a result of their association with the more tangible physical qualities.

The metaphor PROPERTIES ARE POSSESSIONS²²⁰ is also used in the elemental exercises. This can be most obviously seen in the elemental exercises where one visualizes an element moving into a container between the hands of the magician.²²¹ The EFFECTS ARE TRANSFERRED OBJECTS metaphor²²² is used when the transferring of this possession away from the magician is utilized to create psychological changes in the magician. The act of the magician causing movement of the elements into and out of the body to create change in their psychological state also utilizes the CHANGE IS MOTION metaphor.²²³

²¹⁵ Seen in phrases such as “He’s a heavy smoker,” “I’m not a big eater,” and “Let’s look at the larger issues.”

²¹⁶ Seen in phrases such as “He doesn’t have it in him to be polite to his in-laws,” “She has a great capacity for learning,” and “They are full of energy.”

²¹⁷ Seen in phrases such as “She was overflowing with joy,” “She could hardly contain her anger,” and “He bottled up his feelings.”

²¹⁸ Seen in phrases such as “I was filled with rage” and “She is full of love for her child.”

²¹⁹ Seen in phrases such as “Feelings” and “I was touched by their kind words.”

²²⁰ Seen in phrases such as “She has a nice sense of humor,” “He lost his tolerance for alcohol,” “He got his red hair from his mother,” and “He gave his son a sense of self-worth.”

²²¹ With this exercise one can utilize the fact that an individual can do away with a possession, and since the possession is connected with the properties of the element, they can also do away with the undesirable psychological qualities associated with it.

²²² Seen in phrases such as “Don’t give me a hard time!” and “I got a headache from listening to that music.”

²²³ Seen in phrases such as “My car has gone from bad to worse lately,” “Things have shifted a little since you were here last,” and “They moved onto better things.”

Appendix 8

Conceptual Metaphors of the Ritual Space

The magic circle which defines the boundary of the ritual space is fundamentally a container. It is not only a container for ritual activities to take place within, it is also a reflection of the container of the body. This container of the ritual space has a part-whole schema. The parts are the quadrants of the ritual space and the elements associated with these, and the whole is the entirety of the ritual space and the systemic interplay and subsequent unity of the four elements through Spirit. The set of the four quadrants and their associated elements (the parts) are connected to the container (the whole) through the SETS ARE BOUNDED SPATIAL REGIONS metaphor.²²⁴ This is because the physical container is a bounded region composed of a set of parts. These parts are spatialized along the sagittal and horizontal axes using the front-back and left-right schemas. This is because at any point that one is facing one of the cardinal directions, the four quadrants of the ritual space will be in front of, behind, to the left of, and to the right of the magician. This spatialization of the balanced system of the four elements in an evenly distributed (or balanced) and aligned manner combines with the SETS ARE BOUNDED SPATIAL REGIONS to form the (LOGICAL) ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE metaphor.²²⁵ This is possible because bounded spatial regions must have a physical structure, and the structure of the logical organization of the elements (their balancing quality) is reflected in the physical structure of the ritual space through their evenly distributed spatialization. Not only this, but the coherence of the organization of the four elements (or the fact that they collectively make up one coherent elemental theory) is shown through them being used to create a single ritual space, and therefore utilizes the COHERENT IS WHOLE metaphor.²²⁶ The even alignment of the four elements with the four cardinal directions and objects associated with them also reflects the coherence of the theory of the elements by utilizing the COHERENT IS ALIGNED metaphor.²²⁷ Since the ritual space is a physical (yet also

²²⁴ Seen in phrases such as “Are tomatoes in the fruit or the vegetable category?” and “I wouldn’t quite call him a star; he falls just outside that fine line.”

²²⁵ Seen in phrases such as “Which part of the theory don’t you agree with?” and “I admire the way this musician’s composition is put together.”

²²⁶ Seen in phrases such as “Something is missing in that argument,” “A unified theory,” “I’m missing a piece of the puzzle,” and “How does this fit into what you were saying before?”

²²⁷ Seen in phrases such as “The facts just don’t line up,” and “The protest was aligned with her moral convictions.”

imaginal) structure which contains the body, and also represents the spatialized theoretical system of the four elements, we can consider it an example of the THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor.²²⁸ The connection of the ritual space and the body of the magician is made through the PEOPLE/BODIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor, which is possible due to their shared container schema. By utilizing the MIND IS BODY metaphor, one can explore the theory of the four elements through movements and actions within the physical space. This simultaneous exploration of both physical and psychological space then uses the THINKING IS MOVING IN IDEA SPACE metaphor.²²⁹ This metaphor is also utilized in purely visualized methods of creating and acting within the ritual space, such as Kraig's "astral" LBRP (Kraig 2010, 798-799). Moving about is only one of the activities which the ritual space affords. Containers can also hold things, and thus the space can be populated with various ritual objects corresponding to the elements. The elements and the objects are connected using the IDEAS ARE OBJECTS metaphor.²³⁰ Objects which connect to a given element are aligned in their placement with the quadrant of the ritual space which is also connected to that element using the SIMILARITY IS ALIGNMENT metaphor,²³¹ and are placed together using the SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY metaphor.²³² The physical control one has over objects can be used to exercise control over ideas related to the elements through ritual action. This is accomplished using the MENTAL CONTROL IS PHYSICAL CONTROL metaphor.²³³

The spatialization of the four elements and their different modes or lenses of understanding which are implied by them allows for the enactment of the ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF AN ENTITY ARE SIDES OF AN OBJECT metaphor.²³⁴ For example, the west is the side of the ritual space which enables (or encourages) one to understand through

²²⁸ Seen in phrases such as "They constructed this theory from the ground up," "The theory was torn down brick by brick by its opponents," and "His early results form the building blocks for his theory."

²²⁹ Seen in phrases such as "My fear kept me from getting to the truth," "I'm letting my mind drift," and "Don't jump to conclusions."

²³⁰ Seen in phrases such as "They gave the idea to her," "He took the idea from her," "They traded ideas," "After searching all day, they found the idea in a book," and "She carries the idea around with her always, and can't put it aside."

²³¹ Seen in phrases such as "They are working in the same line of research," and "There are many parallels between those two ideas."

²³² Seen in phrases such as "They are siblings, but they are far from being the same," and "Their views aren't the same, but they're close."

²³³ Seen in phrases such as "The idea just slipped through my fingers," "Get a grip," and "I've got a handle on the philosophy of Plato."

²³⁴ Seen in phrases such as "Let's hear her side of the story," "I saw a different side of him when he got angry," and "Let's examine this from another angle."

the lens of Water. Just as different aspects of a situation can be understood through the different perspectives provided by the lenses of the elements, the different aspects of the ritual space (the quadrants) can also be perceived by facing the various sides of the ritual space. The alternative understandings of a situation which the different elements provide are spatialized to the sides of the object that is the ritual space. These sides of the ritual space are thus locations within the ritual space. This allows for the IDEAS ARE LOCATIONS²³⁵ and (MENTAL) STATES ARE LOCATIONS²³⁶ metaphors to also take shape in the ritual space. This means that when one enters a given quadrant of the ritual space, they also enter the corresponding mental state associated with the element of that quadrant. Not only are abstract ideas and mental states associated with the elements spatialized in the quadrants of the ritual space, but so too are various objects attributed with the elements. The items attributed to each element will always be placed on the side of the altar corresponding with that element using the ATTRIBUTION IS CO-LOCATION metaphor.²³⁷

Let us now return to the container schema which forms the foundation of the ritual space. Containers contain an in-out schema, where a distinction can be made between space within and space without the container. This in-out schema is what is used to make the ritual space distinct from the space outside of it. Another property of containers is that they have centers and peripheries. On the periphery of the ritual space are the quadrants which are associated with the four elements, which are the components of the elemental theory which the space represents. At the center is the balancing quality of the theory of the elements in the form of the altar and the magician which represent Spirit. Since this balance is the most important aspect of this theory, we can consider the magician (who is the balancer of the elements) and the altar's placement in the center of the ritual space as an instance of the IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL metaphor.²³⁸

²³⁵ This metaphor is closely connected to THINKING IS MOVING IN IDEA SPACE. Seen in phrases such as “How did you arrive at that idea?” and “He’s stuck in that way of thinking.”

²³⁶ Seen in phrases such as “They are in love,” “She was not in a sober state of mind,” and “The building is in a state of disrepair.”

²³⁷ Seen in phrases such as “Her shirt and pants go together well,” “Biology and Chemistry are both in the field of science,” and “Ritual and Religion are areas of cultural studies.”

²³⁸ Seen in phrases such as “Let’s get to the core of the matter,” “What is central here?” and “That’s just a peripheral issue.”

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